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Illumination

The other day I watched a short video on the internet that choked me up a little bit - no tears but it made my day. It was a video about a little girl who was born with eyes that didn't work well. She could hear but she couldn't see clearly. For the first time they put these cute little pink glasses on her and for the first time she could see clearly. It was neat to see her look around and to be able to see clearly for the first time. Her face lit up as she was finally able to put the faces with the voices of her parents. **You could tell she was eating up every second of it.** Her eyes were finally working the right way and her life was totally transformed as you can imagine.

Most of you can identify to some degree with needing help to see clearly. I didn't get an eye exam until I was in College. I decided to get an eye exam and the test came back that I needed glasses. So they ordered my glasses and the afternoon I got my glasses I took a little trip from Los Angeles up to Fresno, California. It's not a scenic drive through the central valley of California. But I can still remember driving down the road and just staring out the window the whole time in awe. **Everything was clear.** I could see the details of the trees and the farmland. I remember pulling down the mirror in the car and I looked at my face and I was reminded how God was going to have to work a miracle for me to get married. Ha!

Tonight, in our study of Bibliology, we come to the doctrine of illumination. It might be helpful to think of this doctrine as being able to see clearly what we could not see prior to salvation.

So far in our study of bibliology we have considered what the Bible is. We've considered the inspiration of Scripture, the inerrancy and the infallibility of

Scripture. As we begin to land the plane in these first 8 week study of bibliology, we want to consider illumination and interpretation. I put some descriptions of these words in your notes again so you are clear on what these "i" words mean.

- **Inspiration** - God through his Spirit inspired every word penned by the human authors in each of the sixty-six books of the Bible in the original documents (i.e., the autographs). Inspiration describes the process of divine causation behind the authorship of Scripture. It refers to the direct act of God on the human author that resulted in the creation of perfectly written revelation. It conveys the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit whereby he used the individual personality, language, style, and historical context of each writer to produce divinely authoritative writings. These works were truly the product of both the human author and the Holy Spirit. This fits the word Paul used in 2 Timothy 3:16 (*theopneustos*). This Greek word itself carries the sense of “God breathing out” the Scriptures through the biblical writers. “All Scripture is breathed out by God” (ESV) may even be the most accurate way to translate 2 Timothy 3:16. What is most important here is to recognize that the biblical claim of inspiration is one of divine superintendence. God produced the Scriptures by influencing the human author’s own thoughts. This resulted in divinely authoritative and inerrant words written in the autographs.

John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., [*Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 77–78.

- **Inerrancy** - literally “without error.” When applied to Scripture, it means that the Bible is without error in the original copies. It is therefore free, when properly interpreted, from affirming anything that is untrue or contrary to fact.

John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., [*Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 109.

- **Infallibility** - Largely synonymous with an evangelical view of inerrancy. Infallibility means unable to mislead or fail in accomplishing the divinely intended purpose. Article 11 of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (1978) relates it this way: “We affirm that Scripture, having been given by divine inspiration, is infallible, so that, far from misleading us, it is true and reliable in all the matters it addresses.”

John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., [*Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 109.

Definitions of Illumination:

John D. Harvey describes illumination as, "The supernatural help granted by the Spirit of God to the person reading Scripture that enables him or her to understand and appropriate the divine message (Psalm 119:18, 34; Luke 24:45; Ephesians 1:18). **Illumination is not the Spirit's communicating new truth, but rather His persuading us of existing truth and guiding us in the application of that truth.**"

John Walvoord, in *The Holy Spirit* says, "[An] important contribution of the reformation was the doctrine of illumination – the Holy Spirit revealing the teaching of the Word of God. In contrast to the Roman [Catholic] conception that only the priests could interpret the Word, the Reformers openly advocated reading the Bible, affirming that all believers could be taught the Word of God by the Holy Spirit directly."

The Moody Handbook of Theology says, "Even while applying proper hermeneutics and methodology, **there is a divine element to understanding God's truth**. The believer is aided by the Holy Spirit's ministry of illumination in guiding the believer to an understanding of divine truth (1 Cor. 2:11-13)."

Jack Hughes, "Illumination is the Spirit's work in the mind and heart of a believer to reveal to them the truth of God so that they not only understand it, but experience its power. **Our minds, once dull to the Scriptures are spiritually resurrected from the dead**. The Holy Spirit turns on a supernatural light switch in our hearts to reveal the treasures of divine revelation."

Herbert Lockyer in *All About the Holy Spirit* says, "Without a doubt there are many things, even about the Bible, one can know apart from the revelation of the Spirit, but for deep insight into the secrets of God, we are entirely dependent

upon the divine Revealer...**Likewise only the Spirit of God can know and make known the thoughts and teachings and revelations of God.**"

The Need for Illumination:

1 Corinthians 2:14, "but the natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised." Though the Bible is a pure light that can direct our paths and bring us into an understanding of God and His salvation in Christ, man needs special enablement from God due to the Bible's spiritual dimension that raises it above man's natural abilities. When it comes to a right understanding and application of God's Word we are all out of our league without God's help. God not only inspired Scripture, He also has to help us understand it so we can apply it.

It is clear from the Bible that everyone outside of Christ is under the power of sin (Romans 3:9). Every unregenerate person is blind to God's truth (2 Corinthians 4:3-4), dead to its claims (Ephesians 2:1-3) and darkened in their understanding due to the hardness of their heart (Ephesians 4:18). That's the way we all are by nature. **That's what makes this doctrine so vital and so precious.** Apart from illumination we remain dead in our sin, disobedient to God, deceived by the devil and doomed for the everlasting destruction of our souls.

John MacArthur, "Sin has so pervaded man that all his faculties are corrupted by it. He is spiritually blind, for "the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" (2 Cor. 4:4; cf. Rom. 1:21-22; Eph. 4:17-18). When the glory of Christ is presented in the gospel, the natural man does not see it, because the eyes of his heart have been blinded. He is also spiritually deaf; his ears are uncircumcised (Jer. 6:10), and therefore, he cannot perceive the wisdom, grace, and truth announced in the gospel of grace (Isa. 6:9-10; Matt. 13:15; John 8:43). Still further, man's will and affections are entirely disordered, for, as the prophet Jeremiah testifies, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick" (Jer. 17:9). Indeed, the natural man is devoid of spiritual life, for Scripture

says that his heart is a heart of stone (Ezek. 11:19; 36:26), cold and unresponsive to the meaning and glory of divinely revealed truth."

The universal sinfulness of man and the effect of sin on every human mind makes illumination an essential element in believing the gospel

The Work of Illumination:

Illumination is a Trinitarian work - Each Person of the Trinity plays a part in the illumination of Scripture in order to transfer sinners from the domain of darkness to the kingdom of His Son (Colossians 1:13-14).

Remember the purpose of the GBI is more than just filling your head with knowledge of big words some of you may not have heard before. The purpose of the GBI is a three fold purpose:

- 1. Healthy Teaching**
- 2. Holy Living**
- 3. Heartfelt Worship**

How does God want us to worship Him? What kind of worshippers is God seeking? Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well who was living in sin but thought she had worship figured out - John 4:23-24, "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." **To worship God the right way we have to think right about how God uses His word to save sinners into saints and to transform saints into the image of the Savior.**

There is a direct connection between acceptable worship of God and right thinking about God

Let's do a survey of the New Testament to see how the work of illumination is a triune work:

The Father's Work of Illumination:

Matthew's gospel was written to help Jews understand that Jesus is their promised Messiah. As Jesus went about His ministry demonstrating that He is the Messiah a lot of people had a lot of misconceptions about who Jesus was. So, the closer Jesus got to the cross the more time he spent with the disciples to make sure they understood who He was and what He was. You see this discussion in Matthew 16:13-17:

Matthew 16:13-17

- 13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"
- 14 And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets."
- 15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"
- 16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."
- 17 And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

Peter got Jesus right when many got Jesus wrong. If you took a poll in Israel at the time of Christ a lot of different people thought a lot of different things about Jesus. The same is true today.

Notice the word reveal in verse 17. Matthew makes it clear that Peter got Jesus right because God the Father reveals to Peter Jesus' true identity as the Christ, the Son of the living God. Peter got Jesus right when so many people got Jesus wrong. Why? Why did Peter get Jesus right when so many people got Jesus wrong?

Peter got Jesus right because God the Father revealed the truth to Peter

John MacArthur, "God the Father had opened Peter's eyes to the full significance of those claims, and revealed to him who Jesus really was. In other words, God had opened Peter's heart to this deeper knowledge of Christ by faith. Peter was not merely expressing an academic opinion about the identity of Christ; this was a confession of Peter's personal faith, **made possible by a divinely-regenerated heart.**"

In Matthew 16:17 Jesus gives the credit of Peter's confession to God the Father. God the Father didn't open everyone's eyes to Christ. He can actively open the eyes of the blind and He can passively leave people in unbelief. You can go back and read about this in Matthew 11:25-27 and Matthew 13:10-17 on your own time.

Opening anyone's eyes to the glory of Christ is a gift of grace

The fact that He opened Peter's eyes to the glory of Christ as the Messiah was a gift of His grace.

Christ's Work of Illumination:

Luke 24:13-35

- 13 And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem.
- 14 And they were talking with each other about all these things which had taken place.
- 15 While they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself approached and *began* traveling with them.
- 16 But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him.
- 17 And He said to them, "What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?" And they stood still, looking sad.
- 18 One *of them*, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, "Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?"
- 19 And He said to them, "What things?" And they said to Him, "The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people,

- 20 and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him.
- 21 “But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened.
- 22 “But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning,
- 23 and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive.
- 24 “Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see.”
- 25 And He said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!
- 26 “Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?”
- 27 Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.
- 28 And they approached the village where they were going, and He acted as though He were going farther.
- 29 But they urged Him, saying, “Stay with us, for it is *getting* toward evening, and the day is now nearly over.” So He went in to stay with them.
- 30 When He had reclined *at the table* with them, He took the bread and blessed *it*, and breaking *it*, He *began* giving *it* to them.
- 31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight.
- 32 They said to one another, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?”
- 33 And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them,
- 34 saying, “The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon.”
- 35 They *began* to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread.

Jesus died on a Friday and rose again on a Sunday. **In Luke 24, Luke shows us what happened on the day Jesus rose again.** It was a busy day for our risen Savior. Though Jesus had described his death and resurrection many times the people weren't getting it. We see that throughout this chapter. Luke 24 is full of resurrection appearances. The resurrection confirms all that Jesus said about Himself and what He accomplished at the cross.

Luke 24:13-35 describes a resurrection appearance of our Lord to two men who got Jesus wrong. A crucified Messiah didn't fit into their understanding of the Old Testament. A suffering servant wasn't how they viewed the Savior's first coming.

Notice Jesus does some interesting things related to seeing in this section:

a. Jesus prevents them from understanding who He is

Luke wants us to understand that something important is happening in this conversation on the road to Emmaus. **The passive “were kept from recognizing” is a “divine passive, that is, God kept them from recognizing Jesus.** This whole section is about Jesus opening the eyes of these two men to be able to see what they were divinely prevented from seeing about Him.

Another thing we notice is that:

b. Jesus uses Scripture to Explain who He is

Illumination happens through the Scripture and never apart from the Scripture.

Jesus doesn't use extra biblical revelation to open their eyes to who He is.

He takes them back to the Old Testament to show them how it pointed to His death for sins and His resurrection that proved God accepted His one time payment for sin.

Notice how Luke explains how these guys eyes were opened spiritually. After a brief tour through the Old Testament starting with Moses you'll notice in verses 30-32 how they sat down for dinner. Notice what happens and the connection Luke makes between Jesus opening the Scriptures and the Scriptures opening their eyes to Jesus:

c. Jesus opens their eyes to who He is

Luke 24:30-32

- 30 When He had reclined *at the table* with them, He took the bread and blessed *it*, and breaking *it*, He *began* giving *it* to them.
- 31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight.
- 32 They said to one another, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?”

Luke doesn't explain how the two men's eyes were opened when Jesus broke the bread and passed it to them. Did they see the scars on Jesus' hands? We know he showed his scars to Thomas in John 20:24-28. Verse 32 explains what happened before Jesus broke the bread - As Jesus opened the Scriptures the right way, explaining His death and resurrection from the Old Testament, their eyes were opened.

"The supernatural obscurity was replaced by supernatural illumination (perhaps a way for Luke to explain why some come to faith and others do not). The term **recognized** is the same term used in 1:4 with respect to “knowing (*epignos*) the certainty of the things” taught (Stein, *Luke*, 613)."

Kevin D. Zuber, "[Luke.](#)" in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, ed. Michael A. Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 1602.

"What was their basic problem? They did not believe all that the prophets had written about the Messiah. That was the problem with most of the Jews in that day: they saw Messiah as a conquering Redeemer, but they did not see Him as a Suffering Servant. As they read the Old Testament, they saw the glory but not the suffering, the crown but not the cross. The teachers in that day were not unlike some of the “success preachers” today, blind to the *total* message of the Bible.

Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17, nkjv). This explains why Jesus opened the Word to these two men as the three of them walked to Emmaus. Their real problem was not in their heads but in their hearts (see Luke 24:25 and 32, and v. 38). They could have discussed the subject for days and never arrived at a satisfactory answer. What they needed was a fresh understanding of the Word of God, and Jesus gave that understanding to them.

He opened the Scriptures and then opened their eyes, and they realized that Jesus was not only alive *but right there with them!*"

Warren W. Wiersbe, [*The Bible Exposition Commentary*](#), vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 279.

The Holy Spirit's Work of Illumination:

1 Corinthians 2

- 2:1 And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God.
- 2 For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.
- 3 I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling,
- 4 and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,
- 5 so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.
- 6 Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away;
- 7 but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God predestined before the ages to our glory;
- 8 *the wisdom* which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;
- 9 but just as it is written,
 "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard,
 And *which* have not entered the heart of man,
 All that God has prepared for those who love Him."
- 10 For to us God revealed *them* through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.
- 11 For who among men knows the *thoughts* of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the *thoughts* of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.
- 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God,
- 13 which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*.
- 14 But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.
- 15 But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one.

- 16 For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.

In this chapter Paul describes the Holy Spirit's role in:

- Inspiration (v. 10-11)
- Instruction (v. 12-13)
- Illumination (v. 14-16).

"This work of the Spirit with the apostles lays the foundation of the Holy Spirit's ministry with relation to Scripture. Paul spoke of this aspect of the Spirit's ministry in 1 Corinthians 2:10–16, addressing the Spirit's work of revelation and inspiration (2:10–11), instruction (2:12–13), and illumination, affirmation, and utilization (2:14–16)...**The Spirit of truth (John 14:17, 26; 15:26; 16:7, 13; 1 John 4:6; 5:7) has been actively engaged in every aspect of mediating God's Word.**"

John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., [*Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 387.

Beginning in verse 6 through verse 16 Paul mentions the spirit 12 times, with 6 of those references being references to the Holy Spirit. The Corinthian's lived in a society that prized wisdom. Paul is reminding the Corinthians that God alone is the true source of wisdom. These verses explain how God gives us wisdom and helps us understand and apply it to our lives.

John D. Harvey, "God revealed truth to the New Testament writers and they recorded it as part of the process of inspiration, but with the closing of the canon both special revelation and inspiration have ceased. Today, the process by which the Spirit enables us to understand and apply that revealed truth is illumination, not revelation. Paul explains the way in which the Spirit gives us access to the deepest thoughts of God."

Remember the Holy Spirit is God. As the third person of the Trinity, He has direct access to the deep truths also known only by the Father and the Son. **The Spirit mediates God's wisdom.** He is the key to Paul's preaching (1 Cor. 2:4-5, 13). He is the key to the Corinthian's conversion (1 Cor. 2:4-5, 12). He enabled them to make the connection that Paul's preaching of the cross of Christ is the true wisdom of God.

In 1 Corinthians 2:14-16 we see an important distinction between a believer and an unbeliever - Paul calls one a natural man and one a Spiritual man. In these 3 verses, as Paul finishes this section with an important reminder that there is a big difference between those two kinds of people. Sometimes we look at our unbelieving neighbors and they mow their yards and they take out the trash and they say hello and they do nice things and it appears that there's not that big of a difference.

So, what's the big deal? **Talk to them about the cross of Jesus Christ and see what they say.** Talk to them about their own sin against a holy God and the need of a Redeemer who dies to satisfy God the Father's wrath against sin and see where they are at on the true meaning of the cross. They will consider that as total foolishness apart from the Spirit's help.

Who makes the difference? Why do Christians get Jesus right when so many get Jesus wrong? Paul reminds us that the Spirit gets the credit for this. **Only a person who is taught by the Holy Spirit is able to understand God's wisdom spiritually.** The Spirit reveals the truth to our hearts. Through the Spirit we have access to the mind of the Lord.

Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit we are able to see things the way Christ sees them rather than the way the world sees them

The Spirit of God is one of the primary ways in which God “reveals” his glorious plan of salvation (1 Cor. 2:10; Eph. 3:5).

Application of Illumination:

Let's see what we have talked about tonight in action. Please turn in your Bible to Acts 16:14-15 and let's finish our time looking at the first convert to Christ in Europe. Her name is Lydia and we read about how she was converted to Christ in Acts 16:14-15

Acts 16:14-15

- 14 A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.
- 15 And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

Luke describes Lydia prior to becoming a Christian as a worshiper of God. She was a Gentile Proselyte to Judaism. She believed in Israel's God but she wasn't yet a follower of Christ. How did she become a Christian? As Paul is sharing the gospel with her notice in verse 14, in the middle of the verse it says, "and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul." Who opened Lydia's heart to respond to Christ in the gospel? The Lord.

"The same God who created physical light in the universe is the same God who must create supernatural light in the soul and usher believers from the kingdom of darkness to His kingdom of light (Col. 1:13)."

John MacArthur Jr., ed., [*The MacArthur Study Bible*](#), electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1769.

Notice the difference this makes in her life:

a. Lydia is Baptized

In Acts, baptism follows hearing and believing the gospel. Lydia heard the gospel, believed the gospel and was then baptized demonstrating to everyone that she was already a new creation in Christ. She was baptized in obedience to her Savior.

b. Lydia is Hospitable

Lydia prevailed upon Paul and his co-workers in the gospel. Hospitality means to be a lover of strangers. Lydia was probably a wealthy businesswoman and she had the means to care for Paul and his companions. She showed immediate hospitality to fellow believers she just met. This is an evidence of regeneration. This is an evidence of the new birth.

1 John 3:16-18

- 16** We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.
- 17** But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?
- 18** Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

"The knowledge which the teaching of the Spirit imparts is a transforming knowledge." - A.W. Pink