

Read text**Then . . .**

“Come, Holy Ghost, Creator blest, Be pleased within our souls to rest; come with Your grace and heav’nly aid, and fill the hearts which You have made!” Amen.

In the Name of Jesus, Dear fellow Redeemed,

Did you ever pretend you were pirates and hunt for buried treasure when you were children? Some of you may remember Long John Silver and “*Treasure Island*”? For the past several years I have watched a show on the “History Channel” entitled, “*The Curse of Oak Island*.” The Lagina brothers from Michigan have been searching for pirate treasure buried on Oak Island in Nova Scotia.

In each episode something is discovered that keeps these treasure hunters digging. Whether, broken pottery from the 17th century, coins from the 16th c. or a cross of the “Knights Templar” dating from the 14th c., the team is convinced that they will become rich when they found the “Money Pit”!

The search for the “Money Pit” on Oak Island has been called “The world’s greatest treasure hunt.” And perhaps it is by the world’s standards; but the “Money Pit” is surely NOT life’s greatest treasure. In our text Paul teaches that **The Greatest Treasure in Life is Free!**

Of course, Paul is talking about the forgiveness of sins through faith in Christ, without which we cannot see God and gain the riches of heaven. But, like those who searched for the hidden treasure on Oak Island, man thinks he must invest his own money and hard work in order in order to possess heavenly treasure.

A miner once said to a Christian pastor: “I can’t believe that God forgives sins through faith in Jesus alone; it’s all too cheap!”

The pastor then asked: “Tell me, then, how did you get up the mine shaft today?”

“I got into the cage and was pulled to the top, the same as always.

“How much did you pay to come out of the pit?”

The miner was puzzled:

“Pay? I didn’t pay anything at all.”

“Well,” said the pastor, “how could you trust in the safety of that cage when it didn’t cost you anything? – Wasn’t it too cheap?”

“Oh no,” the man replied; “It was cheap for me, but it cost the company a lot to sink that shaft and prepare the equipment necessary to bring the men up!”

In the same way, you and I and all people have forgiveness of sins and salvation, without money or price or works – completely free! The great price of it all was paid by God Himself when He sent His only Son down from heaven, sank Him in the shaft of hell and sacrificed Him for the sins of us all! (LH 141:2,3) Yes, our salvation is free, but it’s not

cheap!

How may we answer those who argue from human reason that the Gospel of Christ seems too cheap to be trusted for their salvation? We might say: "What did you pay to be born into this world, to breathe, or see, or speak, or think, or hear, or walk, and enjoy the wonderful things of creation that surround you today? Nothing! Right? So, why do you think that you must work and pay your own way in order to have the forgiveness of sins? I tell you the truth: **The Greatest Treasure is Free!**

I.

Not a bad argument is it? It may get our friend to stop and think; but no argument from human reason will ever convince him that the forgiveness of sins is a free gift through faith in Christ alone. Why is that? Because this truth is not known through the spirit of this world, as Paul says. **The fallen spirit of this world by which man operates cannot dig down to the "deep things of God."**

The superficial "spirit of this world" is characterized by human PRIDE. As it rummages on the surface of this world for the truth about God, it always imagines God in man's image. Instead of saying with Samuel, "Speak, Lord, for your servant hears," the worldly spirit says, "Hear, Lord, for your servant speaks!"

This is the proud spirit that instructs and influences the whole world. People naturally say: "I've earned everything by the sweat of my brow!" When the seeds they sow produce good fruit and the job they perform brings the goods they desire, they conclude that God must be happy with them, . . . or they don't think of Him at all!

It doesn't occur to the mind of the worldly spirit that his efforts have produced good things only because God continues to bless and preserve His sinful creatures, so that they will consider His goodness toward them. As long as the invisible God continues to bless his life with material things, natural man will try to take the credit, and despise the goodness and mercy of God.

Yet these same superficial "seers" of God have all kinds of opinions about God. Have you ever noticed that? They have read more books than you have about who God is and how He is supposed to deal with man. If anyone will listen, these "know-it-alls" will be happy to set forth God in their own image, according to their own way of thinking.

However, if you really listen, you will see that FEAR characterizes this worldly spirit. Like the little child who often covers his deepest fears with all kinds of excuses and stories, so "the spirit of this world" will set forth opinions about God that seek to justify itself before Him, because it is AFRAID.

It's afraid that the works it has done may NOT be sufficient to escape the eternal punishment that is coming at the hands of an almighty and holy God! The spirit of this world which lives in all people by nature, boasts and blabbers about God; but it cannot know His depths, His true nature, or His plan for the salvation of sinners. **Thanks be to God the Holy Spirit that you and I have NOT received the spirit of this world!**

II.

Speaking of all true Christ-believers, Paul says in v. 12 of our text, that “we have received not the spirit of this world, but the Spirit Who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God!” In vs. 10 and 11 Paul says: “The Spirit searches all things, yes the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so, no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.”

If you want to know what I really think about you, I will have to tell you, right? So also, if you are ever going to know what God really thinks of you, His Spirit must come from Him to you by the working of faith in the Gospel of Christ.

So Jesus once promised His disciples: “The Spirit shall take of mine and show it unto you.” Our Savior was not ONLY talking about that one moment in history which we call Pentecost. He was promising that His Spirit would continue to reveal to sinners “the treasures that exist for us in the deep things of God.”

Some like to preach about the extra-ordinary gifts of the Spirit, such as tongues and healing. They want to make these out to be the extra-special gifts of the Spirit, which enable Christians to DO more for Jesus. But they are entirely and sadly mistaken! **The greatest “charismata” or gifts of the Holy Spirit are NOT given so that we may DO, but so that we may KNOW by faith the treasures which lie in the “deep” things of God.**

The incarnation of Christ and its meaning for us is a deep thing of God that is made known to us only by the Spirit of God. Many who hear about Christ’s suffering and death for our sins, do not receive it and grasp its depths. But as the Spirit of God gives light and understanding through His Word, we learn of a wonder so deep that even the angels were curious about it, as Peter tells us (1Pet. 1:12)

For by the Spirit we believe what Scripture teaches, that the eternal Son of God was made flesh, suffered, and died for the sins of the world. By the Spirit alone we know and deeply perceive that the cross reveals the depths of God’s love, which paid the full price for our sins!

Having only the spirit of this world, how could you and I know that God punished His only Son for the sins of the world and freely offers forgiveness to all! Such a treasure is far too deep to be investigated by men and recorded in the history books. However, as Paul says in Romans 5: “The love of God (for us) has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, Who was given to us!”

The “spirit of the world” is a spirit of FEAR because it does not and cannot know the “perfect love of God which casts out fear.” (1Jn. 4:18) “For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear,” Paul wrote to the Roman Christians, “but you received the Spirit of adoption by Whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father!’ The Spirit Himself bearing witness with our own spirit that we are the children of God.” (Rom. 8:15)

The greatest treasure in life is free and the Spirit makes it known to . . . well, you fill in the blank without fear and with great joy! Amen.