

The Hidden Things of God – Part 1

By Paris Reidhead*

Now I want you to turn to I Corinthians 2. No end attempt is being made to expound this, but during these several services, if the Lord continues to lead as I have discerned His leading so far, I'm going to be speaking to you on The Hidden Things of God, because I believe it's extremely important for us to begin to think God's way. That is a very, very determined fly. I'm gonna swallow him by and by, if he gets that dangerously close again, but so be it, I don't mind at all.

Now, I Corinthians 2 gives to us a basic premise. We're going consider that premise and all of its applications ... oh thank you. Thank you. I just recently saw again, 1776, the musical on our little VCR with John Hancock smashing flies throughout those days in 1776, so I'll pretend I'm John Hancock. Now, let me read. If you're gonna use this tape, you better cut out a lot of this before you show it, or else explain that the flies were here because of protein deficiency on my part.

“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or wisdom declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words and man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power, that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. 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, but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery. Even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory, which none of the princes of this world knew, for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory, but as it is written, eye have not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered in the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man” (or literally what part of a 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. 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, which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 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. But he that is spiritual (perceiveth and) judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ” (I Cor. 2:1-16).

The Hidden Things of God.

We live in a day and a time, which is when the whole focus of activity associated with the name of Christ, is on the visible, the extremely visible, and the very visible. Last summer, during the early month of July, I made a trip with some others in through the southland to some of the great centers that you will see, have speakers on television and in other ways. I was astonished at the magnificence, the extravagant magnificence associated with the proclaiming of the One who had neither had a place to lay His head. Millions, upon millions, upon millions of dollars invested, so that it could become highly visible. I thought as I made that trip from city to city, about that event there in the book of Acts, after the day of Pentecost, when on one occasion, 5,000 people repented of their sin and received Christ. The apostles were so convinced that this was the fulfillment of the Scriptures that they were certain, now that they had proof that Christ was raised from the dead, that the leaders of the temple would welcome them to have their meetings in the Temple area, because, you see, there was no building large enough in Jerusalem to accommodate 5,000 people except the Court of the Temple. There wasn't any building.

I'm certain that the apostles were quite clear in their own minds, that from then on, they were going to meet ... or when other times when the temple services were on, but like some churches getting started in the community, use the Seventh Day Adventist Church on Sundays because they're not using it. Well, since the main day of the Jewish worship was on Friday and Saturday, they thought the first day of the week would permit them to use it, and there'd be gratitude on the part of the temple authorities, but such was not the case. They could not have anyone there saying that Jesus was alive from the dead, because if that were true, first it would prove the Pharisees to be correct in saying there was a resurrection, and the Sadducees

wouldn't permit that. If the Pharisees wouldn't permit it because they were the ones that most loudly cried, "Crucify Him", and this would evidence that He was of God.

The result was that they were told they could not meet in the temple any longer. What did they do? I wondered if perhaps if they didn't have a committee meeting, gathered together the apostles, and this newly formed group called the deacons, who had to wait in an outside room because they weren't quite at the same level as of the apostles. After a while the apostles came out to the assembled deacons and said, "We know now what we're going to do. We want you to constitute yourselves three committees, a legal committee, a real estate committee, and a program committee. The legal committee is to go down to the courthouse and register us as a non-profit organization and immediately to apply for our tax exempt status. The real estate committee is to go down and find the most conspicuous corner in Jerusalem, and make a down payment so that we can get there as soon as possible, a building suitable for this new thing that God is doing. The program committee will develop a program and immediately call for news conferences to allow the newspapers here in Jerusalem to know exactly what we're going to do."

Now, that sounds the way it should have been done had they done it the way we've been taught to do it, but apparently they had some little deficiency in communication. They hadn't been able to get copies of how to promote church growth to them in time to do this the way it might otherwise have been done. So the only One they had to depend on was God. They went to Him and said, "Now look, what are You gonna do?" God said, "Well, it wasn't my idea to use the temple in the first place. If you'd ask Me, you'd a never been there. That wasn't what I had in mind, wasn't that at all. Now you do what I tell you to do. I want you to go from house to house. I want you to go in fellowship, in studying the apostle's doctrine, in breaking your bread, and of prayers." "Well, who's gonna organize them so they know which house to go to?" "If you believe that I conquered death and am alive from the dead, don't you think I could arrange that? Would you allow Me to have a little bit of say so about whom meets with whom where and when?"

But they didn't, and it continued to grow. From that time on, for the next 265 years, they never had a building erected for the worship of Christ. Did you know that the first building ever built for the worship of Jesus Christ was built, began in 313 A.D.? It was a gift from the mother of Constantine, she thought to the Lord, as a thank offering for the conversion of her son, Emperor Constantine, and it was The Church of the Nativity built in Bethlehem over the humble cave where the stable had been in which our Lord had been born. That's the first building built in Christendom. Never before was there a single building erected for the worship of Christ.

Now it's significant to understand this because there was ... the church was seduced into a voluntary captivity by its teachers, its leaders, and its enemies. Back in the second century and the early part of the third century, that would be the last of the 100s and into the 200s, there was a man by the name of Mani, a Persian. Mani was a gnostic dualist. Mani was totally committed to Gnosticism. Now Gnosticism says that ... and it goes clear back to Plato. Now Plato didn't ever have a thought of his own, Plato was a plagiarist. Plato stole, never gave credit, like one of our senators from a nearby state to Washington, but never gave credit, he just stole. For instance, he made a trip to Sicily, and he went from Sicily down to Alexandria, and he spent nearly 26 months, 27 months in Alexandria listening to and studying with the Hindus out of India. That's where he got his concept that is the foundation of Gnosticism. But he also studied with the Jews in exile and that's where he got his close association with Moses and Mosaic thinking.

He was never honest enough to come back and say where he had studied and from whom he learned. What would you think of a man who gave a verbatim account of what happened at the death of Socrates when he was five years old and never was anywhere near Socrates when he died. He tells every word that happened. Is it any wonder then Plato was able to construct this philosophy, which is half Hindu and half nonsense. It actually is this, that when God created, He created only spirit, all just spirit. Then when spirit, man's spirit sinned, God had to get a prison for him, and so the prison was the body. Spirit was put into body and the body is evil because it's the prison of sinful man.

All material is evil according to Plato's philosophy. That's why you hear people talking about a platonic relationship between people, look but don't touch, because the body is bad. Therefore, what you have with Plato is the introduction of a concept

that fit marvelously right into the strategy of Satan. Now we know that if Satan had known what was going to happen by the death and resurrection of Christ, as it said here, He never would have slain the Son of God. From that point on, he is trying to undo this terrible mistake.

This has been nourished down through the centuries, this concept that spirit is good and matter is bad. Well, when we come to the time of Christ, you find the Essenes, one of the groups of the time that went out there. They were like some of the groups we had here, where there was no marriage, so they were doomed to disappear when the existing members had all died. There was no marriage at all, no children, and such was true of the Essenes, the body was bad.

Now Paul is fighting this gnostic heresy in the epistle to the Colossians. The Colossians is basically a refutation of Gnosticism and First John is a further refutation of Gnosticism. At the time of the New Testament, this Gnosticism appeared and it was dealt with by the writers of the Inspired Book. This is now completed, we're in the end of the 100s, and in the beginning of the 200s, and Mani, this Persian philosopher, this Persian gnostic, says, "The way to conquer Christianity is to give Christian terms to Gnosticism." Are you with me? "What we'll do is redefine Christianity by gnostic definitions, and because the Christians don't have very good brain power anyway, they're not very intellectual, as long as they hear the Word that they're familiar with, they'll think it's what they've been taught, and they'll embrace it."

Now you don't think that happens, but a friend of mine was one of the speakers at a Holiness camp meeting out in Ohio. Now he's a great Bible teacher, but he just did not believe in Methodist view of holiness of entire sanctification being the eradication of the old nature. He was saying to some of the other young theologians that were there, part of the pastoral community that was in the conference, "You're people do not understand the doctrines that they're loyal to, they only understand the terms they're familiar with." He said, "If I say certain words, they're gonna get angry and they won't let me finish the week. If I say preach exactly the same thing I would without those terms, and instead say just without any connection the terms they're accustomed to hearing, they will approve, applaud and rejoice in what I'm giving." They said, "Oh no, our people aren't like that." He said, "Well, watch and see."

He started the next service and he taught exactly what he believe, which was contrary to what that camp meeting believed, but at the end he would say, "Heart purity." Had no connection to what was there, "Amen.", came from the pews. Then he would go down and make some other statement, he'd say, "Entire sanctification", "Amen." The men afterwards said, "We never would of believed it, if we hadn't seen it with our own eyes." It wasn't something unusual, it's happening today, even as it did then. Mani came along, redefining Gnosticism with Christian terms and the church heard the terms and rejoiced, but the definition was totally, absolutely different than what the fathers had believed, and taught, and preached. This was the effort of Mani. He didn't succeed as strikingly as he wished. He still never got in. He did it, and it was there, but he still was outside, another stream coming down.

In the middle of the fifth century about 442 or so, Augustine¹ began to make his influence felt. When Augustine was converted — he spent, by the way, nine years studying Manichaeism. Mani had died, but he was under some of their successor teachers. He now is there studying. This young Augustine, who is so immoral, who is so sensual, so absolutely contrary to everything decent and moral, that when H.L. Machin, who shared much of the same character with Augustine, read the confessions of Augustine, they said, "Well, Mr. Machin, what did you think of 'The Confessions of Augustine'?" He went, "Ooh, to have been Augustine." Wicked sensual old man, now that was Augustine. In his confessions, he's telling about all of this. Now he's converted.

The first piece he writes is, "The Reputation of Manichaeism." He uses most of the arguments of a man who was then very well known in the area called Pelagius, but instead of continuing that way, Augustine begins to ask a question. The question he asks is this, "Why was I such a rotter? Why did I do such evil things? Why was my life so wicked?" Now you know the correct answer don't you? Because he wanted to, but that was too honest. That made him responsible, so Augustine hunts around to try to

¹ Saint Augustine, also called Saint Augustine of Hippo, (354 — 430)

find a way by which he can escape from that onus, by trying to find a way by which he can deal with this and still come off scot-free.

What do they say, "How, why was it?" He found that verse in David where it says, "In sin did my mother conceive me" (Psa. 51:5). So he said, "Coitus is evil, the body is bad. The sinful nature is transferred in the act of coitus." He now has the philosophy that is going to bring the church into Babylonian captivity from that time until the present. Because he now has found a way by which he can totally contradict the Word of God. God said in Genesis, when He had made man and gave to him a body, and gave to him with that body appetite for food, for knowledge, for security, for pleasure, for sex, for position and authority, He said of that man with ... and propensities, "It is good."

Augustine comes along and says, "It is bad." The church ever since has been saying, "It is bad." God said, "It's good." I often ask people, "In the Garden of Eden you had two people, they have drives for food, urge for food, appetite for food, knowledge, security, pleasure, status, sex, and God said it was good, and yet when Satan came, what happened? What was the leverage he used to get 100% of all the people in the world to sin?" They didn't have sinful natures, what did they have, they had minds to think, they had emotions to feel, and they volition to choose. They thought and they felt, and they chose against God, and they sinned. 100%! You say, "That was only two." But it's still 100%. Everybody likes to talk about percentages. 100% of them said, they didn't have fallen natures, all they had was appetites and urges, brains to think, emotions to feel, and volitions to choose.

The consequence of this was, now listen, Augustine extended this ... now watch the next thing that happened. Since the body is bad, since the fallen nature is communicated by coitus, what does that mean? That means that the child born of godly parents ...well let me explain what Augustine wrote. He said, "If twin children, two twins are born to godly parents and because there is evidence of weakness, the priest ..." Now you've got somebody visibly there, "The priest takes the first infant and baptizes it. Then after it's baptized, the infant dies and the other child is born and dies before the priest can baptize it, the one that was baptized will be forever in the bliss of Heaven, and the one that wasn't baptized will burn forever in the flames of Hell." That's baptismal regeneration as it came out of the pit. It brought the church into captivity.

Now the next thing you have is the celibate ministry, the priesthood, the body is bad, so the sisters are married to the Lord, and the priests are in celibacy. Visible, everything now becomes visible. Everything now gets up so it can be seen, it's there, and it's prominent. Beheld, all the rituals are, all of the activities are, everything now has become visible and it continues that way for centuries.

We had a Protestant Reformation, and it did everything but reform. It was good, but it didn't go far enough. It didn't reform. You see, it dealt with some things, truly it dealt with some things, but it didn't deal with others. The consequence of it was that we had all of the same things. Oh it's true that when John Wesley² started his little missions throughout England, they didn't have the pulpit from which the preaching was given on one side, and the lectern from which the Scripture was read on the other with the altar in between. No, they did as we do and put the pulpit here to give providence to the Word. Still, it was just a minor adjustment, it was a minor adjustment. Oh Wesley did have one thing that we have to recognize as sheer genius, and that was the little groups of 12 that he had, the class meetings that would meet in a home. Everyone that was converted was assigned to a class meeting where they met once a week. Every person in that group, and that was a select group, nobody else could come, and every person there would deal with what they had done during the past week. They'd tell what sins they committed, what failures they've made, and only once in 45 years was the secrecy of a class meeting ever violated.

You see John Wesley took literally that Scripture verse that says, "Confess your faults one for another and pray one for another that you may be healed" (Jam. 5:16). The class meeting was a time when every person would express what had happened to them, but it was quiet and hidden. The rest of it was all very visible.

They'd been 84 years trying to complete the great cathedral on the hill in Washington, the Anglican Cathedral, and the National Cathedral. Remember most of our founding fathers were all practicing Anglicans. Back then, it was decided that there

² John Wesley (1703-1791) Anglican cleric, Christian theologian, and founding the Methodist movement

would be a national cathedral. Well they're just now within a year or two, they started it in 1905, and now in a year or two they're going to be complete. Oh, it's magnificent. I think it's one of the most magnificent buildings on the North American continent. I can admire its magnificence. I don't think it has anything to do with the Lord, but I think it's a magnificent structure; it has great poetry and marvel. I enjoy it, I enjoy seeing it. It's something to look up and see it there.

It has nothing to do with the Word, had nothing to do with the Lord, but ever since the time of Augustine, this is the way we've moved. Now today, we don't have cathedrals built like that, our Johnny-come-latelies will put them overnight so it seems. They'll build these massive buildings to seat 10, 15, 20,000 people and very, very quickly, and put gold glass on them so they glisten like the New Jerusalem when you see them from 20 miles away. You wonder what is this? The city comes down from above? No, it's just a monument to someone's success and his chosen business. It's there.

Now, that's visible, but in all the midst of this, has there been anything that God has done? Yes, yes, there has been. When our missionaries went to China 200 years ago, they did as missionaries have ever done, they took the church structures with them. It's a little surprising to see pictures of missions in China and see a church built by the Baptist that resemble the First Baptist Church of Keokuk, Iowa. The Iowans knew what kind of a building they wanted, but they built the same thing in China. They didn't allow the Chinese people to build something that would be characteristically theirs; we showed them "what a church should be". We got them up there, and after nearly 170 years of ministry, we had about three and a half million converts. All of them associated with these magnificent structures transplanted from Britain, Europe, and America.

When the Communist came in, led by Mao, it was very easy for him to capture the work of 170 years, because they were all so visible. What happened was the people in Keokuk, Iowa, that sacrificed to build that church out there in China, now found that the church they had built was turned into a recreation center for Communist use. That what happened to most of the churches, 100s of them, several thousand of them throughout China. A few were kept for religious worship because it was necessary for the Chinese government to showcase some kind of religious activity, so a few were kept, but most of them went away and killed.

In 1969, when Nixon was getting ready to go to China, the Washington Post carried an article. Now I wish I had saved it. If you want I'll go back to the Washington Post, their archives and dig it up for you, but I didn't save it because I just thought ... I didn't save it, that's all. It was in the second section, which is world; I think it would be about 16 pages from the front. It said this, "Communist Chinese government reports on the first 20 years." The article was about that long, one column. See, Washington Post didn't want to do anything to disturb this beautiful new thing that was gonna happen between Mr. Nixon and the Chinese so they had to put it in, cause the Chinese had announced, but bury it, don't put it on the headlines.

It said, "During the first 20 years, the Communist government of China has found it necessary to deprive of existence ..." Isn't that a nice way to talk about killing, "To deprive of existence 30 million people plus." I don't know how big the plus was, but they only admitted to 30 million. They said, "Half of these were deprived of existence because they had steadfastly adhered to economic principles contrary to the regime." That is they didn't like to have their goods stolen from them, so they were killed. That's a good way to cure economic malady isn't it? Kill them. "The other half, that would be 15 million, were deprived of existence for stubborn adherence to religions imported from the imperialist west." Generally that means the United States and Europe, but in this case because it was religions, that could be from Burma with Buddhism and India with Hinduism and Saudi Arabia with Islam, and Europe and America with Christianity.

Let's assume that Christians are a little more to die for Christ than Muslims are, that half of these people, that half of 15 million died out of their love for Christ. It's an assumption, I'm pulling it off the ceiling, I admit that, but there were a lot of evidence that this was a very serious problem. For instance, did you know that for the first 10 or 12 years of the Communist regime, children that reported that their parents were practicing Christians were given medals? The parents were arrested, they were brought there in groups, wooden crosses, just boards nailed together were laid on the ground, the little child with his medal would stand at the base and the parents had to stand at the head of the cross, and the statement was read by the soldiers and the official that, "If these renegade people will walk on that cross to their son or daughter, we will let them live, but if they

don't we'll shoot them where they stand." Thousands and tens of thousands of parents stood there while the machine guns mowed them down, because they would not step on the cross and walk to their children.

We know this was a very costly thing. We only left three and a half million, and now I'm saying seven and a half million people have died for Christ. What does this mean? We understand by it? If seven and a half million people died and we only left three and a half, wouldn't that indicate that there had been 100% increase in the number of believers? It would to me. There was a 100%, the probably didn't capture all of that 100%, so there was a seed left. Because He said, "The blood of the martyrs would be the seed of the church." Now God has a chance to do another thing His way. All the buildings have been converted to recreational centers. All of the organized clergy have been killed. All they've got some people, new converts, that have fallen in love with Christ and found a few pages of the Scripture. What are they gonna do?

Well apparently what they did, was to say, "Lord, how do you want to us arrange this thing? Do you want us to build a building and get shot?" The Lord said, "You know that wasn't My idea, I never really had that in My main plan anyway." "Well, what do you want us to do?" "Well, why don't you do what they did in Acts? Why don't you hide? I'll know where you are. Don't take a place of meeting, and don't take a time of meeting because if you have a set place and a set time, they're gonna catch you, and they're gonna kill you, so why don't you just meet and 'I'll give you apostles and prophets and pastors and evangelists and teachers,' but you don't need to put a bandage on them or a badge on them, you'll know who they are, and I know who they are (Eph. 4:11). You don't need a preacher anyway, hiding situation, and you aren't gonna have to be able to sing 'cause if they find you singing, the neighbors gonna run out and get the police." Well what's happened since 1969?

According to what we now know. We know there are at least 25 million people in something we call, they don't, the House Church Movement. They don't have a name for it, but we have created, of course a lot of problems as our tourists have gone into China, and yet Communist guise. One of the first questions they ask if they're Baptists from Keokuk, Iowa, they say, "Could you take us to an underground church?" "There's no such thing as an underground..." "Oh yes, our preacher says there's an under..." All of a sudden the intelligence is now beginning to scratch through China to find where this underground church is. Two months ago, they arrested eight men and they said, "You're part of the underground church." They said, "We've never heard of it." "You're some of those Christians." "Oh yes, we're Christian. We've never heard of underground church." "Well, take us to it."

They were like Herod, "So we can worship. Take us to it." They said, "We don't know where to take it. We don't know." He says, "How does it work?" They don't have any set place and they don't have any set time, but the family will be in prayer and the Lord will speak to them and say, "Go over and see Tom and Jane." They go over to the Chinese equivalent of Tom and Jane, and when they get there, two other families felt led of the Lord to come into Tom and Jane. Now they all love the Lord and they have ways of getting that known, so they have a service, but they never meet again that group, but they always meet.

Ruth Graham, when Stan Cattrall was starting his run, his China run from Northwest down to Shanghai. When he made the run across China, Ruth Graham sent him a cable saying, because she was born in China, and she's had some of the Chinese community with her, she said, "Stan, there are 150 million of us Chinese believers praying for you, and the government can't find them. If we could just keep the tourist away, maybe they can continue to grow."

You say, "Well, why do you talk like that?" Recently a man I know was in Russia. He had learned Russian, he was Russian background, and he was interpreting for a group of Christian tourists in Russia. Because he was the interpreter, he met them and they'd talk to him. The prophets in the Baptist and Pentecostal churches in Russia are saying this, "God is saying to us that persecution is going break out in America far worse than anything that's ever happened in Russia." Are you hearing that in your churches in America? Wherever we have prophets, this is what we're hearing in Russia, and they're saying to the church of America, "Prepare, prepare, prepare, for persecution is going breakout unlike worse than anything that ever happened." You say, "You think so?" Well I want you to know this, I hope not, but I've carried automobile insurance for 50 years, paid a lot of money for it, and just because I'm not disappointed because I haven't had to use it. Do you understand?

Fire insurance, paid a lot of money for fire insurance, and I'm not sad because I didn't get my money's worth, never had to use it. "What are you saying?" I'm saying this, "I hope it doesn't come to America, but I can't find one good reason why it

shouldn't." I can't find one thing to say to Almighty God, "Well because of this, we ought not to have what they've had in Russia and worse." With the number of babies that are being killed every year with our open abortion, my goodness, if God doesn't judge America, He's going have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah for what He did to them.

You say, "Well, these are very serious words." "Well these are very serious times." I think it behooves us to understand that God has hidden things, hidden blessings, and that He wants to have a hidden people. Listen as I read you a few verses from Psalm 83, and listen particularly for the one word that you're gonna hear, "Keep not thy silence oh God. Hold not thy peace and be not still, O God, for lo thine enemies make a tumult and they that hate thee have lifted up the head. They have taken crafty counsel against thy people and consulted against thy hidden ones" (Psa. 83:1-3).

* Reference such as: Delivered at Camp Perkins, Stanley, Idaho on Monday, July 25, 1988 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.

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