

“Unity: Minding the Spirit”

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 2:1-16

Graphic: cross, division, wisdom vs cross, computers, tech support

Key Verses: 2:12 Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God...15 Those who are spiritual discern all things...16b But we have the mind of Christ.

Theme: Unity in Christ when we, by the Holy Spirit living in us, understand the gifts from God, discern spiritual things, and have the mind of Christ. It is only by the support, guidance, and truth of the Spirit can we do that.

1) Introduction

- a) Technology is great, isn't it? I mean, where would we be without cell phones these days? What would the world be like if computers didn't run things like traffic signals and the simplest machines? All of the cars that most of us used to get here today have computers in them and won't run if those computers don't work.
- b) And even though one problem with technology and computers is that they can be used for evil purposes, just like anything else (that's a sermon for another day), the main problem with technology is that it is VERY COMPLICATED. And when it breaks, it needs to be fixed by someone who knows all about it. Anybody call technical support for something recently?
- c) The computer in our audio/visual booth just last week needed repair. Nobody up there could fix it...I certainly couldn't. But it needed to be fixed. And without guidance from others who knew what they were doing, it would still be useless.
- d) And so we call the help line...we call technical support...we call the computer guy down the street...we call our grandkids (☺). The person on the other end of the phone can usually help, because that's what they do. We tap into THEIR knowledge and understanding in order to use the computers and cell phones...and sometimes, we even buy software or a gadget based on the availability of help. It makes our experience better.
- e) And if we don't know how to use something, or can't, we get frustrated and confused.
- f) We may feel this way about working out our faith in our daily lives, as well. As we continue to walk through the first part of 1 Corinthians, we find some good news! There is a divine help desk...divine support available. We have

immediate access to God's wisdom and it comes through the Holy Spirit, for those who have accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior.

- g) Turn with me to 1 Corinthians 2, and let's find out what else comes with the Holy Spirit's guidance and direction in our lives...what else we get to understand??...
- h) Let's pray...

2) Scripture

a) Read 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

- i) Paul is remembering back to when he first came to Corinth...to a people that were NOT BELIEVERS. They were pagans, worshipping pagan gods...or they were Jews, worshipping the God of Abraham and Isaac, trying to keep the Law as best they could.
- ii) They didn't KNOW Christ, or Paul, or anything about this message that Paul brought.
- iii) And Paul reminds them that when he came, he came with a message about the mystery of God...this testimony about God. And this mystery of God, Paul told us earlier in the chapter, is that **Jesus Christ is the way to forgiveness from sin and eternity with God, because of his death on the cross and resurrection.**
- iv) And this testimony is about that ONE THING...the crucified Christ.
- v) And just like Paul's been telling them, this message was not lofty...it wasn't with human wisdom, so that NO ONE could say that the cross is less and Paul was more. So that NO ONE could BOAST in anything but the cross. So that all Christians would be unified under the banner of Christ.
- vi) That's a key point that Paul is making. If we claim to do ANYTHING in regard to the salvation of ANYONE, apart from the cross of Christ, we are deluding the cross as a tool for US, and not the PLAN of God.
- vii) And so Paul tells us (in verse 3) he was weak...that he was fearful...that he was trembling...when he brought that message. Was it because he was afraid of the people rejecting him? This is PAUL! We don't get the sense in any part of his letters that he was afraid of

- anything, except not bringing the message of Christ crucified. It couldn't be that he thought he would be persecuted, although he probably WAS!
- viii) Paul was weak, and fearful, and trembling because he CHOSE, he DECIDED (verse 2) to bring this message. And the message is SO CRITICAL...SO FOOLISH...SO UNBELIEVEABLE...and in comparison to the MESSAGE, he was puny, and weak, and filled with fear.
- ix) He KNEW his words and this message, he says in verse 4, were not with plausible words of wisdom...they didn't make sense in the way that the people knew things to make sense.
- x) BUT...BUT...(there's that word again), those foolish words AND THE OUTCOME FROM THEM, are a demonstration of the HOLY SPIRIT's PRESENCE and POWER.
- xi) SO THAT (this is WHY), so that the faith of the Corinthians, and OUR FAITH, doesn't rest on HUMAN STUFF, but on Godly, divine, Holy Spirit power.
- xii) Let's me sum up this first part...Paul said, "I have ONE MESSAGE: Jesus Christ was crucified and raised again so you could be forgiven and set free for eternity. I brought that message to you as a fearful weakling. I didn't try to persuade you with debating and logic. And I did that so God could PROVE to you that this message is TRUTH and you would see for yourselves the POWER of the Holy Spirit.
- xiii) As I stand here today, or as you build relationships with those who don't know the Lord, or as you mentor those sisters and brothers who are weaker in the faith, we can trust that the Holy Spirit will take whatever we do and whatever we say IF IT'S authentically in Jesus' name, and display His power and might and use it for His good.
- xiv) Paul's testimony was NOTHING without the Holy Spirit. Our preaching is worthless without a willingness to be laid aside for Christ. Your testimony about your conversion or your conviction about God working in your life is NOTHING without the power of the Holy Spirit. And the sooner we GET THAT, the sooner we can be confident in our message about Jesus and then get OUT OF THE WAY so God can show His AWESOME POWER.

xv) But this type of power is not available to just everyone. There are certain truths known by those who are spiritual (Paul's code for those who put their faith and trust in Jesus for salvation), that are NOT available to those who are NOT saved.

b) Read verses 6-7

- i) There is a certain set of things that God has chosen to reveal only to those who are actively inviting the Holy Spirit to show them the things of God.
- ii) But those things aren't the worldly wisdom you want, says Paul...they are the mysterious, the hidden - the incredible things about God.
- iii) And so, Paul now, talking to the church, makes a shift from talking about the simplicity of the message that displays the power of the Spirit so that we can believe and be saved, TO talking about LIVING LIFE AS a saved, maturing Christian.
- iv) Paul puts people in two distinct camps...you are either saved and open to receive the Godly wisdom that comes from the Holy Spirit, or you are unsaved and are disqualified from that divine wisdom, having to settle for the wisdom of the world, which leads to death.
- v) This is Paul's encouragement to stop wandering around this life without the guidance of the Holy Spirit and begin this journey with Christ as Lord and Savior. And when you do that, the things of God will be revealed to you.
- vi) And then, as we move from A to B to C to D in our faith, the Holy Spirit illumines more and more of the AWESOMNESS of God to us – more about Jesus...more about the fruits of being Spirit-led people...more about God's plan for us and the church...more about our spiritual gifts.
- vii) The Godly wisdom Paul talks about to the church is this set of things that can only be understood to those who are born-again Christians walking in the presence of the Holy Spirit.

c) Read verses 8

- i) Think about that...if the rulers of this world, those who are NOT believers in Jesus Christ, would have understood this godly-wisdom that comes through the Holy Spirit, they wouldn't have crucified Christ. I'm thinking. "Yeah, but, if they didn't crucify Christ, then there would be no

message for Paul to proclaim.” And so Paul is sarcastically criticizing those who think that they know the truth, based on their own wisdom...

d) Read verses 9-11

- i) By our own perceptions, what we can see or hear or understand, we can know only the things of the world, according to Paul.
- ii) But by the Holy Spirit in us, we have this amazing potential to understand the deep things of God. In addition to the things of the world, things that our human spirits discern and understand about being human, we can know the things of God.
- iii) That means we are able to understand ‘what God has prepared for those who love him’ – for NOW and for the FUTURE. This is God’s plan for our lives...and for eternity.
- iv) And then Paul goes on to give us three specific things that we are called to in response to being the ones who are given this incredible wisdom from God.

e) Read verse 12

- i) The first thing we get to understand is that God bestows gifts on those who receive the Holy Spirit.
- ii) We may not know what they are right away. We may not be taking the time to understand HOW to use them for the glory of God. But just because of our limited understanding of the gifts and how to use them, doesn’t mean that God hasn’t given them to us.
- iii) Look, if we understand God to be omnipotent and omniscient, then God knows what it’ll take to get the job done for the Kingdom.
- iv) And part of God’s plan is to give you spiritual gifts for the Holy Spirit to spark in you so God can use you the way he made you. And we’ll be spending time illuminating what that means this year, but suffice to say that every single person who is a believer in the salvation of Jesus Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit is gifted to serve.
- v) And so our first task, #1, is to understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. (Underline that) Take the time to start praying about that in your own life. Do it now, so that when we start pressing into God to ask for clarity in this as a church, your human spirit will be raised in its

awareness to God's Spirit moving to inform you and equip you and empower you...

vi) What else do we get to understand when the Holy Spirit comes...

f) Read verses 13-15

- i) If we are spiritual – again, Paul's code for Christians who are actively inviting the Holy Spirit in their lives – if we are spiritual, we get to understand spiritual things.
- ii) The flip side is that those who are unspiritual, who don't have Christ as Lord and Savior, do NOT receive the gifts, and CAN NOT understand the things of God.
- iii) The unspiritual can understand the things of this world just fine. That is exactly why there are millions and millions of yet unsaved people who appear to be so incredibly blessed in their finances, families, homes, cars, careers, etc. They UNDERSTAND the things of this world. They figured it out, because THAT'S the stuff available to everyone as human.
- iv) The cool thing, though, is that being Christian doesn't disqualify us from being human, right? I mean, still human after I got saved. But...and here's the cool part, not only do we get to understand all the things of this world, but we get to understand all the things of God, through the Spirit.
- v) So we're like, 'This is perfect! Best of both worlds!' Right? Cool, right? BUT! (that word again)...here's the catch: once you accept Christ, and once you understand the things of GOD, the things of this world PALE in comparison.
- vi) I've heard some of your testimonies about once wanting and having lots of the things of this world (money, cars, prestige, etc.). But once you started seriously walking with the Lord, THOSE things faded...THE WORLDLY THINGS became less important. And so, even though, the Christian can interpret things of the world, the things of God become SO much more important.
- vii) So, number 2, in verse 13, we get to interpret spiritual things AND we get to interpret worldly things with spiritual filters.
- viii) Finally, verse 16...

g) Read verse 16

- i) Spiritual beings get to understand the mind of Christ. When we hashed this out in our men's meeting this week, we agreed that having the mind of Christ is doing what Jesus would do.
- ii) You've heard that phrase, What Would Jesus Do? Paul is saying that those who are walking with the Lord and living authentic Christian lives in the presence of the Holy Spirit, don't have to ask what Jesus would do...we just DO what Jesus would do...
- iii) And as we'll find out next week, this ideal of understanding the gifts given to us by God and using them, being fully attuned to spiritual and worldly things, and having the mind of Christ is not something that comes quickly or easily...yet it is the promise that God gives us in Christ Jesus.

3) Conclusion

- a) This morning, as you can see, we will take communion. I invite you to come to this table for Communion. Most of the time, when we have contact with God it is in prayer, reading our Bibles at home or in our small groups...it's serving God with our hands – loving people around us. It's like picking up the phone for that computer support. Sometime we feel like we're on hold forever and we never get the full attention of the person...of God.
- b) Communion is different, friends. Very different. Communion is our direct connection to God in a physical and spiritual act of obedience and grace. This is a bit like walking into the computer store for help with your computer...it's talking face-to-face and making eye contact with the One that guides you, helps you, cares deeply for you, and died for you. It's a direct communion with Almighty God. The Holy Spirit is right here waiting to be the one to give, inspire, and show you.
- c) Come and open yourself to the gifts that God has given you...the Spirit will give them to you.
- d) Come and be inspired by the mysterious and powerful...the Spirit will inspire and encourage you.
- e) Come and agree together to have the mind of Christ...the Spirit will show us together.
- f) (kneel) Let's pray...