

Review: From last time...

We've been seeing that 1 Corinthians is a book that shows us how to deal with problems. One of the key things churches must do if they're going to deal with problems in a God-honoring way is to keep their focus where it belongs.

Discuss: According to 1 Corinthians 1, where should our focus *not* be? Where *should* it be?

Last time we explored the question: "What difference will this (i.e. Paul's explanation in chapter 1 about the Cross and our calling) make in how we do ministry (ch. 2)?" Paul explained the significance in two ways in chapter 2, first by explaining the difference it made for him when in Corinth (in verses 1-5), and then by addressing the more general implications for ministry everywhere (in the final six verses of chapter 2).

We looked at verses 1-10a last time. Here were the highlights...

I. Paul explains the implications for his ministry at Corinth (1-5).

A. Here's what he did NOT do (1).

1. *He didn't use eloquence.*
2. *He didn't use superior wisdom.*

B. Here's what he did (2-5).

1. *He emphasized Christ and His crucifixion (2).*
2. *He came in personal weakness (3).*

Q: What do you think Paul was like as a preacher? Why do you think he said he came "trembling?"

3. *He depended upon a demonstration of the Spirit's power in his preaching (4).*
4. *He desired to see faith that depended on God's power, not man's wisdom (5).*

II. Paul explains the implications for ministry everywhere (6-16).

God gives us two things that make ministry possible. Paul addresses those two subjects in this section. We should strive to have ministries characterized by these two things.

A. Our ministry should be characterized by God's wisdom (6-10a).

What's true of God's wisdom?

1. *God's wisdom isn't like the world's (6).*
2. *God's wisdom is secret (7).*

It's a "mystery," as the KJV puts it. It's something that we could never "figure out" on our own. To grasp God's wisdom takes special revelation.

3. *God's wisdom has been hidden (7b).*

You can't find it on your own.

4. *God destined His wisdom for our glory (7c).*

Who understands God's wisdom?

5. *The rulers of this age don't (8-9).*

6. *Only God's people do (10).*

We understand it for two reasons....

⇒ We understand it because God revealed it.

⇒ God revealed it by His Spirit.

That's the Holy Spirit. And Paul will elaborate on this in the next section.

B. Our ministry should be characterized by God's Spirit (10b-16).

This is key. We want ministries that depend on the Spirit, not upon our eloquence, instincts, and understanding.

New Material...

What will a ministry look like if it's marked by the presence and enablement of the Holy Spirit?

Discussion: What are some common perceptions of the Holy Spirit's ministry? Respond to the following. If someone said to you, "I'm looking for a church where you can *feel* the Spirit...", what might their expectations be? List what people who say that are often looking for...

Let's look carefully at what God's Word says about the subject of the Holy Spirit.

I. What's true of the Holy Spirit (10b-13)?

Paul mentions four things that are true of the Spirit...

A. The Spirit searches (10b).

Q: What does He search?

1. *He searches all things.*

Q: What does that mean?

Q: Is there anything off limits to the Spirit of God?

2. *He searches the deep things of God.*

The word "deep" often refers to the unfathomable depths of the sea (*Shepherd's Notes*, 1 Cor).

See: Deut 29:29

Application: Some today say, "Giving people Bible verses is superficial. The Bible can address 'spiritual' matters, but for the DEEP matters of the soul, you must go outside the Bible..." And so psychology promotes to do the "deep" work.

But psychology is superficial in its very nature. Who better knows the "deep" things of man, not to mention the "deep" things of God, better than our Maker, God Himself? And God says His Spirit knows the "deep things" of God. And as we'll see, God reveals those things to us in His Word.

B. The Spirit knows (11).

Q: What does He know? Paul mentions two things...

1. *He knows what no one else knows.*

2. *He knows the thoughts of God.*

Common Assumption Today: If you want to know truth—about God or yourself or life—where are we told we should look? We’re told to *look within ourselves*. “You have all you need. Just look within. Just follow your inner voice.”

Q: What’s the problem with such counsel, according to v 11?

C. The Spirit is from God (12).

Q: How have we benefited from Him?

1. *We have received Him.*

Q: What did we NOT receive?

Q: When does a person receive the Holy Spirit? See Eph 1:13-14

2. *We can understand what God has freely given to us.*

Note: Who is the “we” that is speaking here? Primarily, it’s Paul and his associate, Sosthenes. Keep in mind the Holy Spirit played a role in the lives of the apostles that He doesn’t play today. He revealed truth to the apostles as predicted by Jesus (in John 16:13-14), who in turn wrote that truth down for us in the pages of the NT (see 2 Peter 3:1-2)

Q: What are the things God has “freely given us” in v 12? We’ll gain further insight in the following verses.

D. The Spirit teaches (13).

1. *He enables us to speak.*

Q: What does Paul have in mind here? What kind of “speaking”? See v 4—it has to do with evangelism, how we seek to preach and Christ known. We do so in dependence upon the Spirit’s power.

2. *He enables us to express spiritual truths.*

The NIV renders the phrase, “expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.” The KJV, “comparing spiritual things with spiritual.”

Q: What does that mean? In my estimation, Paul’s not talking about being “mystical” here. The NIV textual footnote offers an alternative rendering, “Interpreting spiritual truths to spiritual men.”

The point isn’t that the Holy Spirit drops truth into the mouth of the speaker, bypassing the mind. This isn’t anti-intellectual. The Spirit works through the mind and preparation of the speaker (e.g. 2 Tim 2:15, “Study to show thyself...”).

It has to do with the effect on the receiver of the message. The Spirit enables us to have successful ministry. Without Him, no one would understand the message we preach, let alone accept it.

Paul elaborates in the next verse...

II. What’s true of the natural man (14)?

The NIV calls this person, “The man without the Spirit.” The KJV renders it more literally, “The *natural* man.” The Greek term is *psuchikos*, meaning “of the senses,” or “sensuous,” hence, “natural” (i.e. the Adamic man).¹

¹ As observed by C. I. Schofield in footnote, p. 1234.

Q: According to verse 14, what is true of this person?

A. He doesn't have the Holy Spirit.

There are two categories of people in the world—those who have the Spirit, and those who don't. You are either one or the other.

Q: How does a person receive the Spirit? Read Rom 8:1-17 (especially verses 15-16).

B. He doesn't accept the things that come from the Holy Spirit.

Q: What opinion does he have of them?

Q: What does that mean?

C. He cannot understand these things.

Q: Why not?

III. What's true of the spiritual man (15-16)?

The "spiritual" man simply refers to the person who has the Holy Spirit. What's true of such a person?

A. He judges all things (15).

If you have the Spirit, you have the capacity to discern truth from error, right from wrong. You can "make sense" of life, and especially of God's Word.

We often hear, "We're not supposed to judge." That's not what this verse says. The spiritual man makes judgments about "all things."

Q: What does that mean?

B. He is not subject to judgment (15b).

Q: What do think Paul means here?

Paul certainly can't mean we won't be judged. People make judgments of us all the time. But in the final analysis, the judgments of men don't matter, do they? Whose judgment matters? God's does.

C. He has the mind of Christ (16).

Notice how Paul personalizes this with "we." If you have the Spirit, what does this entitle you to experience? The mind of Christ.

Discuss: What difference should this make in our lives? See Phil 2:5ff.

Implications: Some discussion questions...

1. Why must we depend upon the Holy Spirit in ministry?
2. What will be true of our ministries if we they are characterized by dependence upon the Holy Spirit?
3. What can we do to experience the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives?