

The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Believer

1 Corinthians 2:6-16

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Help From the Holy Spirit

Over the past few weeks of our study through 1 Corinthians we have taken a deep look into the wisdom and the power of the Cross of Jesus Christ. We studied two dimensions of the power of the Cross. The first dimension involves receiving the effects of the Cross in your life including the forgiveness and acceptance of God's amazing grace. The second dimension of the Cross relates to God's power and grace expressed "through" us as we humbly accept and live out the truth of the Gospel. The message of "Jesus Christ and Him crucified" is much more than just a lofty theological idea. We experience its power and wisdom as it is appropriated in our lives. This is the point that Paul wants to drive home to the church in Corinth. Although they had received the gospel message, their community of faith was marked by division, arrogance, competition and spiritual elitism. Although Paul's preaching had focused on a suffering Messiah who obediently endured humiliation, weakness and torture on a brutal cross, the Corinthians had elevated "superior wisdom", "eloquence" and "strength" as the hallmarks of true spirituality. What was missing in the church at Corinth? If the problem was not with the message they had received, then what was the problem? Paul intends to make this clear as he introduces the next critical element in his argument—that of the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. The primary thrust of Chapter 2 is that the foremost activity of the Spirit of God is to help Christians understand and implement the truths of God in our lives.

Wisdom from the Spirit

The challenge of Chapter 2 is that Paul employs some of the religious vocabulary that was commonplace in Corinth to expose their folly and beat them at their own game. Because of this, it can appear at first glance that Paul is proposing a "secret wisdom" available to some and not others. This would certainly be ironic as this kind of thinking was the root cause of the division in Corinth in the first place. When we take a closer look, however, we realize that Paul is leading his readers into a trap in which they realize that true wisdom is available to all believers, because all believers have the Holy Spirit. There is, in fact, a great mystery of God that has "been kept hidden for ages and generations, but [it] is now disclosed to the saints" (Col. 1:26). This secret wisdom is nothing more than the truth of Jesus Christ, His death and resurrection and the new life that we have in Him. For the man without the Spirit, this is foolishness, because the things of God are "spiritually discerned" (vs. 14). But, for the man with the Spirit, these truths have been revealed. Therefore, it is only through the Holy Spirit that we can understand what God has freely given us. The Holy Spirit will always lead us to a focus on the Cross of Jesus Christ. True wisdom does not entail moving on from the Cross—only into a more profound understanding of it.

Resolve from the Spirit

The problem in Corinth was not with the content of the message they had received, but with the degree to which they were depending on the Holy Spirit of God to lead them into a Cross-centered way of living. Paul's comparison of "the man without the Spirit" and "the spiritual man" in verses 14 and 15 reveal another significant activity of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. When we yield to the Spirit in our lives He gives us the resolve to bring God's perspective to bear on every aspect of life. Whereas the man without the Spirit cannot understand or accept the things of God, the person with Spirit can make intelligent spiritual decisions in accordance with the reality of the Cross. This is the place where the rubber meets the road—where thinking becomes doing. It is from this place that Paul levels his judgment on the Corinthians saying, "You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly?" In Corinth, their behavior had condemned them. This is a powerful message for us today. What should the Community of Christ look like? As spiritual people, people who have the mind of Christ, what should our lives look like? Do we reflect the humility, the grace, the love and unity that the message of the Cross should create in our lives? The Holy Spirit has been given to us to lead us into a deeper understanding of these things. It is our job to follow His leading.

Ideas for Reflection and Discussion

The Activity of the Holy Spirit

What has been your understanding of the role or activity of the Holy Spirit in your life as a follower of Christ? How has that understanding been increased by this text?

Remember back to the first time the Message of the Gospel of Christ made sense to you? How was the Holy Spirit working in your life to bring you to that understanding (i.e. life circumstances, relationships, etc)?

Is there a difference between “understanding” something from an intellectual standpoint and accepting the truth of that thing in your life? How would you describe this difference?

Events:

October Outreach

During the month of October the ministries that River West has the privilege to partner with are combining efforts to collect needed items that will benefit the people at Dinner & A Movie, Community House and The Hotel Ministry. We will have shopping carts in the lobby starting today where you can bring the much needed items. For more information contact, Donna Scales @ 635.5139

Ongoing...

Foundations—Thursdays starting October 4th, 7:00-8:30pm @ RWLG
Foundations is a series of classes designed to help you stand strong in your Christian faith. Everyone is invited to come to any of the classes on a drop in basis. Childcare available with pre-registration. For more information contact Pastor Adam McMurray at 699.2226 or adam@riverwest.org.