

**To Exalt Christ**

**To Equip, Encourage, Exhort and Edify God's Elect**

**The Church's Communicator – 1 Corinthians 2:11-16**

We live in an age of mass, rapid communication. We have cell-phones, computers, I-Pads all of which are connected to the Internet via hundreds of satellites that encircle the earth. There is hardly a place on earth that you cannot engage a satellite by which you can contact someone either by text or by talk.

My computer at home communicates up-to-the- minute information about the weather, stock markets, traffic conditions in Ottawa and sports scores. I can send my sermon text wirelessly from my study in the basement up to Martha's printer in her office on the second floor in nano-seconds.

Communication is nothing new. It has always been. It began before creation. There was communication between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and the angels that make up the heavenly host. Genesis 1:1 tells us that God created the heavens & the earth & that the Holy Spirit was hovering over the waters.

That information was communicated by God to a man, named Moses who wrote all five books of the Pentateuch – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. That was just the start as God continued to communicate via the Holy Spirit through various authors, the contents of 61 more books and epistles, that constitute our Bible, 1 Corinthians being one.

Whenever we read and study God's word, we know that the Holy Spirit is hovering over and around every word in Scripture ready to reveal its meaning, implication and application for our lives. In 2 Peter 1:21 Peter testified to the Holy Spirit's involvement – *"For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."* To be *"carried along by the Holy Spirit"* is indicative of the Holy Spirit's invisible and irresistible power in all the revelatory work that he does as the church's great communicator between God and mankind.

Beginning in 1 Corinthians 1:17 through to our full text today, Paul has been writing in terms of wisdom, intelligence and philosophy. Hardly anywhere else in his writings does he refer to these things. Why might this be? Why in Corinthians?

Corinth was a city much like Athens. In Acts 17:21-34, Luke recorded this about Athens – *“All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.”* This is why Paul was given the opportunity to speak publicly in Athens about God.

Prompted by an altar inscribed, *“TO AN UNKNOWN GOD”*, Paul spoke of **the** God who made everything and who had appointed as judge one whom God had raised from the dead. The resurrection piqued their curiosity. It was, *“the latest idea.”* Some rejected it, others wanted to hear more and others believed such as *“Dionysius...Damaris & a number of others”*.

Corinth, like Athens, was a cosmopolitan and competitive city, so things that fitted the categories of wisdom, intelligence and philosophy would be popular in Corinth.

Paul of course was pitting the wisdom and intelligence of God against that of human wisdom and intelligence. This is why 1 Corinthians 2:9-10 are important. They are important because it is here that Paul introduces the Holy Spirit as the great communicator of the wisdom and intelligence of God.

In verses 9 and 10 Paul wrote – *“However, as it is written: “No eye has seen, nor ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him” but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.”*

There is only one way that we can know *“what God has prepared for those who love him”* and that is by the Holy Spirit revealing it to us. Paul takes the Corinthians and us to a whole new level of communication between God and mankind but also within the God-head of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Verse 9 lists three faculties by which we are informed; ear, eye and mind, hearing, sight and thought, respectively. Verse 10 tells us the means by which we learn the things of God intended for us. The Holy Spirit reveals them, communicates them to us. We also learn that the Holy Spirit has direct access to *“even the deep things of God.”* Our faith in Christ is evidence of the secret work of the Holy Spirit to bring us to faith and salvation in Christ but also to the presence of the Holy Spirit in us. As a result, he communicates to us what God wants us to –

## Discover and Discern – 1 Corinthians 2:11-16

We discover in **verse 11a** – *“For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him?”* Spirit (little ‘s’) in this instance, means *“the rational soul, mental disposition.”* There is within us a disposition, a natural tendency to dialogue and to think going on all the time. Our minds are never at rest. Consequently, we know ourselves and our thoughts as Paul says. Paul uses that as a model in **verse 11b** of how the Holy Spirit knows the thoughts of God – *“In the same way,”* says Paul, *“no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.”*

Consequently, the Holy Spirit communicates to us *“the thoughts of God”* through the written word, the Bible. All we need to know is revealed to us.

We also discover that those lines of communication go both ways. God communicates to us through the Holy Spirit, but he is also the means by which we communicate with God. In Romans 8:26-27 we read – *“We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will.”* The Holy Spirit intercedes, pleads, communicates our needs brought to God in prayer.

He is similar to our internet service provider who takes our messages and passes them on to someone. They all go through the internet provider, in this case, the Holy Spirit.

In **verse 12** we discover – *“We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.”* When the Holy Spirit comes as one sent, he begins the sanctifying work of giving our old, worldly spirit, a forcible ejection. With the coming of the Holy Spirit comes the ability to *“understand what God has freely given us.”*

To understand is to discern, to perceive, to comprehend, to grasp, to have those moments when Biblical truth floods into our heart, mind and soul. John Calvin gives a prime example of discovery and discernment regarding *“what God has freely given us.”* He writes – *“The elect have the Spirit given them, by whose testimony they are assured that they have been adopted to the hope of eternal salvation.”*

That adoption Calvin speaks of is what God has freely given to us. Adoption translates into the gospel by which we are saved through the death and resurrection

of Christ. Adoption is sonship, the means by which we become by faith a child of God. Adoption is evidence of the Holy Spirit's secret inner work in the life one who has truly been born again by the Holy Spirit and has rejected the world's spirit. In Matthew 7:13-14 Jesus spoke of the world's spirit and the Spirit that is from God respectively when he said – *“broad is the road that leads to destruction and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”* The few who find it have the Holy Spirit, they have been adopted for salvation.

In **verse 13** Paul wrote – *“This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.”* Paul did not learn of his need to be saved or the way to be saved or the theology and doctrine expressed in his letters by listening to others, but by being the recipient of the Holy Spirit on the day of his conversion. Once the Holy Spirit was given him his means of communication to God the Father & the Son was immediately established. Paul was, as he said from then on, – *“taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.”*

I like the way John Calvin (1509-1564) puts it – *“Now it is a high commendation that he pronounces on his preaching, when he says of it that it contains a secret revelation of the most important matters – the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the sum of our salvation, and the inestimable treasures of Christ, that the Corinthians may know how highly it ought to be prized.”*

Paul brags about his preaching but only because of its content and its source, i.e., *“words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words”* IOW his preaching/teaching/writing reflects and reiterates what has been given to him from God through the revelatory, communicative work of the Holy Spirit.

Paul had the Holy Spirit and so do we if we have been born again by the Holy Spirit and received that gift of the Spirit which comes as it did for Paul.

Look at **verse 14** for what happens when the Holy Spirit is not present. Paul wrote – *“The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.”*

Remember what Paul had earlier stated in 1 Corinthians 1:18 – *“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”* That verse describes the one who is without

the Spirit and the one who has the Spirit respectively. Nothing about the Christian faith or the Bible makes sense to the one without the Holy Spirit. The lines of communication do not exist. That person can be a brilliant scientist or university professor and have multiple doctorates but if they do not have the Holy Spirit present in their lives, then the cross, the gospel is foolishness to them.

He cannot accept them as Paul says. He cannot understand them, *“because they are spiritually discerned.”* Calvin says it is not just that they are unwilling, but that they are unable to understand, unable to discern the spiritual things of God.

In **verse 15** Paul refers again to those who have the Holy Spirit. He writes – *“The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man’s judgment.”* IOW Paul is saying that once the Holy Spirit has entered into the life and being of a person, they are able to make judgments, they are able to discern what is right and what is wrong, what is Godly and what is not.

Matthew Henry, 1662-1714, comments – *“The spiritual man may judge of all things, natural and supernatural, human and divine...But he himself is judged or discerned of no man...he can discern what is and what is not, the doctrine of the gospel and of salvation and whether a man preaches the truths of God or not.”*

In Romans 8:33-34 Paul wrote – *“Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus who died – more than that- who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.”* The Holy Spirit intercedes, communicates for us but so does Christ.

**Verse 16** reads – *“For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?”* (Isaiah 40:13). *“But we have the mind of Christ”* says Paul. Wisdom, knowledge, revelation, disclosure, flow in only one direction from God through the Holy Spirit to us. God is, Christ is, the Holy Spirit is, omniscient, knowing all things. In Psalm 139:4 David wrote of their omniscience – *“Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O Lord.”*

We have the mind of Christ because we have the Spirit of Christ who communicates to us, his church, as Calvin put it – *“the most important matters – the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the sum of our salvation, and the inestimable treasures of Christ.”* Amen – ***Soli Deo Gloria.***