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Taking the Next Step in Your Dependence on the Holy Spirit – 1 Corinthians 2:1-16

- let me ask you this morning to think back over the past week and then answer this question...what have you been depending on?...
 - I realize that's a fairly vague question...but please think about it, what have you been depending on?...
 - you might say – how would I even know?...well, think about what captivated your mind, where you invested your time, your resources...what was high on your priority list...etc?... What were you depending on?
 - then you could even broaden it out and consider...what does the average person depend on?...
 - one answer in this culture is – on your looks...we are into style, for sure...so you may have invested hours upon hours this week in diet and exercise and make-up and fashion...
 - and the fact of the matter is – when you walk into a room, what you're depending on is the way you look...and even if you say that's not true for some people, the amount of attention and resources that area of their life receives argues differently...
 - others might have to conclude...I'm depending on my wit...
 - you're a funny person...and you've learned how to use your sense of humor to put people at ease, to make the sale, to get yourself out of tight spaces...but let's face it, you depend on your quick wit...
 - others depend on their intellect...you are a smart person...so if you were in an argument this week...you probably won, not necessarily because you arrived at the truth or achieved a fair compromise...you won because you outsmarted and logically outmaneuvered the person with whom you were arguing...you depend on your intellect...
 - there's hundreds of potential answers...you can depend on your money, you can depend on your heritage, your athletic ability, your popularity...there's a lot of different ways you could answer this question...
- now, let's narrow the focus...let's say that the Lord gave you some sort of ministry opportunity this week...and I'm sure he did, and I hope you recognized it...perhaps an opportunity to speak for Christ, maybe to help someone who was hurting or challenge someone who was sinning...but some opportunity to minister...
 - what were you depending on in that situation?...your intellect?...the fact that you had just the right verse of Scripture?...your reputation (the fact that your life is in a whole lot better shape)...
 - see, when ministry opportunities arise, what are you depending on?...and what do you typically depend on?...
- 2 more questions – does your approach usually produce pride or humility in you?...does what you depend on really come down to some sort of self-reliance?...
 - and lastly, does your approach result in unity or division?...does it draw people together, or does it drive them apart?...
- we've put a lot on the table already – to receive direction for all of this, let me invite you to open your Bible to I Corinthians chapter 2...page 130 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you...

- our church's theme this year is **Taking the Next Step...With Joy**...this is a verse by verse study of the book of 1 Corinthians...
- and so far we've learned that regrettably this church body was terribly divided...
- so much so that they were rallying around certain people in the church – I'm of Paul, I'm of Apollos...Peter...Christ...
- this problem was so pervasive that it will continue to be a focus well into chapter 3...for example, if you peek ahead to chapter 3, verse 4, 5, 21, 22...they all continue to deal with this issue of pride and division among the people of God...
 - and it can happen today in the church, it can happen in the home, at the workplace and neighborhood...it is amazing how many things people can divide up and fight over...
- now, today we're going to focus on chapter 2, and we're going to see that one of the antidotes to pride and the division it brings...is learning to depend (to rely) on the right thing...read **1 Corinthians 2:1-16**...as we read, notice how many times the Holy Spirit is mentioned...
- we're talking about **Taking the Next Step in our Dependence on the Holy Spirit**...and with the time we have remaining, let's look for **3 ways God's people depend on God's Spirit**.

I. We Depend on the Holy Spirit for the Focus of Our Message – 2:1-5.

- now we always start by interpreting the passage in the context in which it was written and then we broaden it out to where we're living today...
- but it's clear that Paul is reminding the Corinthians about what his ministry was like when he came to Corinth...
- sure it was a cosmopolitan city, and there was a great love for wisdom and philosophy and many people in that culture prided themselves on their intellect, or their beauty, or their athletic prowess...
- and Paul's point is – I didn't fall into that trap...I didn't try to "out-world the world"...

A. What it wasn't.

1. superiority of speech.

- **v. 1 – I did not come with superiority of speech...**
- now, that doesn't mean that Paul used bad grammar or that he mixed his metaphors...it simply means that he was not depending on his skills as an orator or lack thereof to carry the day...
- and by the way, just as an aside, if you are keeping some sort of running list of excuses for why you don't try to lead your family in a more Christ-centered way, or you don't try to solve problems in a biblical fashion, or you don't try to speak for Christ at work or whatever...
 - if "I'm not a very good speaker" is on the excuse list...you can go ahead and get that one crossed off...because clearly, that is not the focus...that's not what you should be depending on...

2. persuasive words of wisdom.

- **v. 4 and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom...**
- that does not mean that Paul was unintelligent...we know enough about his education and training to know the exact opposite was the case...but again, that was not the focus...that is not what he was depending on...
- well, then, how did he come?...

B. What it was.

1. the testimony of God – v. 1

- testimony – maturation – a testimony or witness

- **John MacArthur - A person can only testify to what he himself has seen or heard or experienced. A witness in a courtroom is to report only what he knows objectively, factually, and personally. He is not to speculate, guess, or deduce. Paul was a witness only to God's revelation, not to his own human understanding or reason or inclinations. God's revelation was everything; human wisdom was nothing.**
- that is a very important piece of this puzzle...our job is simply to give others the testimony of God's Word...and to explain how His word has impacted our heart and life...(that is something you can depend on)

2. in weakness, fear, and much trembling – v. 3

- now, I think we have to be careful lest we think of Paul as cowering down behind the Corinthian pulpit, hardly able to utter two syllables...
- but if you go back to the book of Acts and read in chapters 16-17 about the significant opposition Paul faced before arriving in Corinth...he certainly could have been tempted to come to them in anger, or with the goal of intimidating them or putting on some front of self-confidence or arrogant air...
- Paul said – I didn't do any of that...
 - by the way, do you have that excuse list handy...we already crossed off "I'm not articulate enough"...now you can take "I'm not smart enough" or "I'm fearful" from the list as well...
 - see, none of that is to be the focus (what you're depending on)...your excellence of speech, your wisdom, your confidence and boldness...well, why?...

C. Here's why.

1. To demonstrate the power of the Holy Spirit.

- **1 Corinthians 2:4 - and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,**
- Paul wanted everyone involved to conclude that this was an intensely spiritual transaction...there was much more to this than what met the eye...
- now, please remember this important theological point...what was/is the Holy Spirit's purpose?...
- **John 16:12-14 – I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose *it* to you.**

2. Because the Holy Spirit's responsibility is to draw attention to our Savior.

- 1 Corinthians 2:2 - For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.**
- see, if Paul was all wrapped up in his knowledge or his speaking abilities, then everybody leaves talking about Paul – but in this case, everybody rightly goes away talking about Christ...and the result is very important...

3. So your faith would rest on the power of God.

- 1 Corinthians 2:5 - so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.**

- now, let's push the pause button on that for a moment and think about what it looks like in real time...please go back to the original question...what have you been depending on this week...

- let's take the person who had an argument with another member of the family that morning...and all day they have to focus on something...
 - do you realize that for many people, that "something" is something other than what we're reading in this text?...
 - 1. For example, some are focusing on their arguing skills...they have it all laid out in their mind---they might even write it out on paper --- but when they get home, that person is going to get a piece of their mind (as if they have any extra to spare)...
 - 2. Others are focusing on how they're going to hurt that other person – I'm going to bring up their failure from the past, and I'm going to smear their face in it, and I'm going to embarrass them, or make them feel as bad as they made me feel this morning...that will teach him to mess with me...
 - 3. Someone else is rehearsing the threats...the trump card – I'll leave, I'll file for divorce...how do you like those apples...
 - 4. Or, lining up the witnesses...let me tell you all the people who agree with me... I've been researching this all day---Oprah, Dr. Phil, my college roommate, and your mother...people even try to get one of the pastors in the middle of it --- I learned long ago that sometimes people are calling you only because you're going to be the trump card in the argument later that evening...
- what's lacking in all of that?...
 - how about focusing on what the Holy Spirit of God might be trying to accomplish in you?...how about relying on how Jesus Christ can be magnified by how you function as a peacemaker in your home tonight?...
 - and as the kids are watching all of that unfold, their confidence isn't in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God...
 - and it wasn't all about your sophisticated arguments and your intimidating speech – the focus was on Christ, and Him crucified...
 - that's part of what it means to walk in the Spirit, to develop the fruit of the Spirit....
 - we depend on the Holy Spirit for the Focus of our Message....

II. We Depend on the Holy Spirit for the Source of Our Message.

- Paul goes on to say – we do speak wisdom...it's not that we're spouting foolishness...
- but it is wisdom that is only recognized by people who are mature...[v. 6]
- now, please don't think about that as being some sort of super-saint...the idea here is a person who is fully vested in the family, complete – who possess the Holy Spirit of God and therefore can recognize God's wisdom...
- the rulers of the age in verse 6 don't have the Holy Spirit, it's a mystery to them...so they can't understand wisdom or even recognize it...
- but that is certainly no cause for us to be boastful...because if we possess any divine wisdom at all, it is only because....

A. The Holy Spirit revealed it.

- now, please follow the logic very carefully...
- verse 9 is a quote from the latter chapters of the book of Isaiah...
 - and Paul is saying – this is not something we subjected to the scientific method...
 - eye hasn't seen this, ear hasn't heard it...
 - **v. 10 – For to us God revealed them through the Spirit...**
 - so let's go back to that argument for a moment...let's say that spouse adopts the focus of Paul....and instead of planning the defense, or planning the threat, or planning the games...
 - let's say he focuses on making the discussion that night one that is filled with the fruit of the Spirit...and one that honors Christ...

- and he says something like, honey, please forgive me for being unkind this morning, and the more I think of it, let's just do it the way you would like to do it...
- and his wife forgives him and they enjoy a delightful evening together...
- well, when he puts his head down on his pillow, is he thinking – I am so smart...I played that just right...I am so eloquent...I am so holy...let's hope not...
- let's hope he's thinking --- I could have never done that were it not for the wisdom God's Spirit has given me in His Word, and the grace God's Spirit has pointed to me to in God's Son...
- and when you continue through the logic of the passage, you have to conclude, why would I go to any other source?...
- **1 Corinthians 2:11 - For who among men knows the *thoughts* of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the *thoughts* of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.**
- what does that mean?...it's a fascinating thought...
- the first half is saying – no one knows you, like you...
- and no one knows God, like His Spirit...here's the point...

B. These are the very thoughts of God.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 - All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

- why would we ever depend on anything else?
- and do we understand how important it is, and how valuable it is to have the Holy Spirit resident inside of us to help appreciate, and value, and interpret, and apply the wisdom of God's Word?...
- **Martin Luther – The Bible cannot be understood simply by study or talent; you must count only on the influence of the Holy Spirit.**
- **John Calvin – The testimony of the Holy Spirit is superior to reason. For...these words will not obtain full credit in the hearts of men until they are sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit.**

C. Take-aways?

1. Be sure you have the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:9 - However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

- develop the gospel

2. Be sure you are creating a spirit-filled atmosphere in your home.

Ephesians 5:18 - And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,

Galatians 5:16 - But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

- see, what are you depending on in your family?...what's the focus in the home?...
- and you might say, should we be trying to create little monasteries?...no, but it certainly ought to be a place where the Spirit of God can freely work, and the Son of God is given the position of preeminence, and the Word of God is the source of truth for daily living...

- see, Paul was depending on the Holy Spirit for the source of His message...are you?...
- let's talk about what you watch on TV...the Scripture is clear that it is possible to...

Ephesians 4:30 - Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

1 Thessalonians 5:19 - Do not quench the Spirit;

- some families do that night after night after night with what they watch on TV...or the kind of music they listen to...
 - they are grieving the Spirit of God...they are quenching the potential work of the Spirit...
 - and then they can't understand why there's such disunity in the home...
- it's because people are living for different kings because the work of the Spirit promoting the Savior has been ignored...If you're not depending on the Holy Spirit for the focus of your message and the source...Whatever you are depending on will let you down.

3. Let the "Spirit's sword" become your source of truth.

- Hebrews 4:12-13 - For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

- I realize that you might say – that's the problem – I've been trying to live by my own wisdom my whole life...I don't know anything about the Bible...
- that's fine – everybody starts somewhere...but here are the steps I'd encourage you to take...
 - a. Read James MacDonald's "God Wrote a Book" – this will help you understand where the Bible came from, and why we believe it is the Word of God...
 - b. Read Max Anders' 30 Days to Understanding the Bible
 - c. Buy a good study Bible and begin reading the NT and the study notes
 - d. Begin studying books from the resource center on areas that are of practical interest to you (good examples of applying the Scripture to real life)
 - e. (for those who have taken those steps) Read Michael Emlet's CrossTalk --- Where Life and Scripture Meet...
 - this book helps us understand that the Bible isn't like a cookbook, where we simply connect problems in our life with the appropriate verses in the Bible – take 2 John 3:16's and call me in the morning...
 - it's less like a cookbook and more like a novel...
 - and the goal is to connect the story of what is happening in your life with the Bible's story of what God is doing through the history of revelation climaxed in the 1st and 2nd coming at the redemptive work of His son...
 - this book contains a very important message about the nature of Scripture and the way we use it in growth and ministry...

III. We Depend on the Holy Spirit for the Success of Our Message.

- it's unfortunate, but...

A. Truth will be rejected by natural man.

- **1 Corinthians 2:14 - But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.**

- that's why there's no reason to focus on eloquent speech, or sophisticated reasoning...
- and we've said several times recently that we do all we can to present the claims of Christ in a careful, thoughtful way – but we're not trying to argue people into the kingdom...
- but the good news is...

B. The mind of Christ is available to those who have the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:15-16 - But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.

C. Implications to those who would like to help others?

1. Possessing the Holy Spirit is one of the most important qualifications.

Galatians 6:1 - Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; *each one* looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.

- sometimes we think we have to have all the degrees, or all the answers...
- God has clearly designed ministry in such a way that He does not want the focus to be on our abilities...
- [develop – lay counseling – how frequently God allows someone who is just starting to have a “great case.”]

2. Be sure to always ground your help in the wisdom of God.

- develop the BCTC...

- conclusion – praying Monday PM for the conference and then hearing the reports of three different counselors having the privilege of leading people to Christ Monday...never thought – “aren't we wonderful” – this approach places the credit where it belongs, and unifies the team in the process...