

1 Corinthians 2:9-16 New Living Translation (NLT)

⁹That is what the Scriptures mean when they say,

"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him."^[a]

¹⁰But ^[b]it was to us that God revealed these things by his Spirit. For his Spirit searches out everything and shows us God's deep secrets. ¹¹No one can know a person's thoughts except that person's own spirit, and no one can know God's thoughts except God's own Spirit. ¹²And we have received God's Spirit (not the world's spirit), so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us.

¹³When we tell you these things, we do not use words that come from human wisdom. Instead, we speak words given to us by the Spirit, using the Spirit's words to explain spiritual truths.^[c] ¹⁴But people who aren't spiritual^[d] can't receive these truths from God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them and they can't understand it, for only those who are spiritual can understand what the Spirit means. ¹⁵Those who are spiritual can evaluate all things, but they themselves cannot be evaluated by others. ¹⁶For,

"Who can know the Lord's thoughts? Who knows enough to teach him?"^[e]

But we understand these things, for we have the mind of Christ.

We are now in week 5 of a 6-week series on listening to God. We have reflected on listening to God through the Bible, through Prayer and through Circumstances. Today we listen to God through the Holy Spirit...

I am going to read some excerpts from a book entitled, Streams of Living Water, written by Richard Foster who is a Christian theologian and author in the Quaker tradition.

William Joseph Seymour was an African-American who grew up in Centerville, Louisiana

☞ A gifted pastor & evangelist, Seymour ended up being invited to Los Angeles, CA by a small prayer group as their pastor

☞ On 9th April, 1906 Seymour preached at an evening house prayer meeting but he never finished his sermon. The Spirit fell like a torrent and "immediately the entire company was swept to its knees as if by some unseen power, amid an outpouring of tongues and sudden joy. Jennie Evans Moore, who later married Seymour, went to the piano (though she did not know how to play) and played flawlessly as she sang (in a voice known for its beauty) in six foreign languages she did not know, with interpretation for each: French, Spanish, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and Hindustani... for three days this little prayer group of cooks, caretakers, labourers, railroad porters, and washwomen carried on in exuberant celebration and ecstatic worship" (p. 116).

☞ "Within days this jubilant, ragtag group was joined by huge crowds of both black & white, necessitating a larger facility. Quickly an old two-story building at 312 Azusa Street was secured..... A surge of interest brought huge crowds from virtually every race, nationality, and social class to Seymour's congregation. Meetings were held three times a day – morning, afternoon, and evening – often merging and flowing into one continuous worship experience from early morning to late night. The inside of the building overflowed with perhaps eight hundred persons, while four to five hundred more stood on the board sidewalk outside, squeezing together at the windows and doors in an attempt to see inside. These meetings continued unabated for three years.... Not only were people streaming into Azusa Street, but they were going out as well. Within weeks of those... meetings, the first overseas missionaries departed for Scandinavia, India, and China, followed by others to Africa & elsewhere" (pp. 117-118).

☞ One eyewitness summarized the event this way: "No choir... No collections are taken. No notices have been posted to advertise the meetings. No church organization is back of it... You find a two-storey whitewashed old building. You would hardly expect heavenly visitations there, unless you remember the stable of Bethlehem" (p. 118).

☞ The Azusa Street Mission as it came to be called, was the genesis of the modern Pentecostal-Charismatic movements which spread over the entire earth.

☞ Its major contribution was the breaking down of social, gender & racial distinctions = we are all "one in the Spirit", empowered for missionary service!

1. What a wonderful story of the moving of God's Spirit! We should not dismiss it as fiction (it is recorded historical fact) but nor should we seek blindly to mimic it. As we reflect upon our theme today of "listening to God through the Holy Spirit", let's determine that we will base our knowledge of The Holy Spirit on the Bible rather than any cultural perceptions of what it means to listen to God through the Holy Spirit.

2. Paul is writing his first letter to the Corinthian Church, to address a variety of problems in the church (who would have thought! ☺), but mainly to counter the abuses of what he calls the "pneumatikoi", that is the so-called "spiritual ones", who were claiming spiritual superiority over those in the congregation at Corinth.

3. These so-called "spiritual ones" who had entered the community were using their spirituality as a badge of false "wisdom" which caused power-play divisions in the congregation (I follow Paul, I follow Apollos, I follow Peter, I follow Christ), and using their spiritual gifts as weapons of false authority, power and intimidation rather than instruments of loving service.

4. So Paul begins this chapter: "When I first came to you, dear brothers and sisters, I didn't use lofty words and impressive wisdom to tell you God's secret plan. ²For I decided that while I was with you I would forget everything except Jesus Christ, the one who was crucified. ³I came to you in weakness—timid and trembling.⁴And my message and my preaching were very plain. Rather than using clever and persuasive speeches, I relied only on the power of the Holy Spirit. ⁵I did this so you would trust not in human wisdom but in the power of God".

5. When we are humble & vulnerable & available to rely on God's Holy Spirit, we will experience God's power

Listening to and Obeying the Spirit will mean...

1. **Being Energized:** lit. "Energy" ruach (Heb) pneuma (Gr) = breath / wind... can't be controlled

- In the Old original Creation as outlined in Genesis 1, the Spirit brought order to the chaos and in the New Creation, it is God's Spirit who makes known the reality of our New Life in Christ

- For Paul, it is The Cross; The Crucified Christ, which the Holy Spirit makes known.

- ILL: I'm sure most of us have been for an eye examination more than once. If you recall, you take your glasses (or contact lenses) off and stare at writing on a screen that is blurry. Then the optometrist places a number of different lenses on each eye until the writing on the screen comes into focus. For Paul, that is what the Spirit does for us as every person, every circumstance, every institution is now measured by the prism of The Cross, The Crucified Christ. As Paul declares in 2 Cor 5:17...

- Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the New Creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

- 1 Cor 1:²⁵ This foolish plan of God is wiser than the wisest of human plans, and God's weakness is stronger than the greatest of human strength.

- In this New Creation, we don't have to strive to be saved, to have favour with God, but we simply need to rest in faith (trust) on the finished work of Jesus Christ on the Cross. Paul declares: "I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ who now lives in me". We are given gifts of the Holy Spirit and as we abide in His Spirit, & we can expect fruit by His Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Listening to and Obeying the Spirit will mean...

2. **Being Empowered:** As you read the Gospel of Luke & Acts you will hear: "You will be clothed with power from the Spirit & will be my witnesses... in Doncaster, Manningham, Victoria to the uttermost parts of the world!" Empowerment means being given a holy boldness to share our faith and see souls saved, to pray effectively, to believe God for healings and miracles,... we must live into this empowerment by acknowledging it, believing it with all our hearts, earnestly desiring it and waiting for the Wind to Blow!!

Listening to and Obeying the Spirit will mean...

3. **Being Encouraged:**

- We are saints
- We are receivers of grace and peace
- We are blessed with every spiritual blessing
- We are chosen before the creation of the world
- We are predestined
- We are adopted into God's family
- We are redeemed – set free from slavery to sin and our sinful natures
- We are forgiven and We are lavished with God's grace
- We are given wisdom and understanding
- God's will is made known to us and We are included in Christ
- We are sealed with the Holy Spirit who is a guarantee of a glorious inheritance
- We are called to hope
- His incomparably great power works in us and God has given us life
- We are seated in heavenly places and We are saved by grace
- We are God's workmanship
- We are brought near through Christ's blood
- We are reconciled with others and We have access to the Father
- We are fellow citizens with God's people
- We are a dwelling place for God's Spirit and We are members of one body
- We share in the promise of Christ and We can approach God with freedom

Listening to and Obeying the Spirit will mean...

4. **Being Expectant:**

- Do you hear the Spirit speaking to you?...
 - Words of invitation (for as many as received Him, He gave the right to become children of God)
 - Words of affirmation (neither do I condemn you, you are forgiven, go in peace)
 - Words of concern (don't let your hearts be troubled, trust in me...)
 - Words of comfort (come to me all you who are weary & heavy laden...)
 - Words of assistance (I will ask the Father and he will give you an Advocate-HS to help you...)
 - Words of promise (behold, I will be with you till the very end of the age)
- The Spirit speaks to those who are open – ⁹ "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him." ¹⁰ But it was to us that God revealed these things by his Spirit. For his Spirit searches out everything and shows us God's deep secrets.
- The Spirit speaks to genuine worshippers (John 4:21-23)
- The Spirit speaks so we can understand –

"Who can know the Lord's thoughts?

Who knows enough to teach him?"^[e]

But we understand these things, for we have the mind of Christ.

- Let's pray:** Dear Lord, we thank you that you have giving us your Spirit so that we can continue to enjoy a relationship with you as we complete the works you have begun on earth. Help us to remain humble, available and vigilant to all that you might be saying to us and revealing to us, and open to all you might be doing in our Church and in the world around us. May we seek to know more deeply the truths of the Gospel, the Up-side-down Kingdom, through the lens of the Cross and the Crucified Christ so that we will truly be your ambassadors of love, and life and grace to a hurting world. In your Name we pray. Amen.