

CHIEF MINISTRIES

April 2019

“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth....He dwells with you and will be in you” (John 14:16-17)

“If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, 95% of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference.” AW Tozer.

The disciples of Jesus did not enjoy hearing about the Holy Spirit. It made them uneasy. Today some Christians feel the same way. The mention of Him makes them uneasy. There can be many reasons for this. The reason the Twelve did not like the idea of the Holy Spirit – at least at first – was because it sent a signal to them about Jesus’s departure. To the Twelve, the Holy Spirit meant losing Jesus. The initial reference to the Holy Spirit came simultaneously with the mentioning of Jesus’ going away. This was upsetting. After all, the Twelve felt they were at long last getting to understand Jesus Himself. They were slowly getting to know some of His ways. They had followed Him for three years. They knew what He looked like. They knew His height, the color of His eyes, hair and skin. They knew the sound of His voice. They heard His sermons, the parables, the dialogues with Pharisees and Sadducees. They saw the miracles, the healings, and they saw Him walk on water. They were convinced He was the long – awaited Messiah who would come. They anticipated Him setting up His kingdom and overthrowing Rome at any moment.

But Jesus began to talk about going away. The notion of Him going away was puzzling. I wonder if they listened very carefully at all. The reason I say that is because after He was raised from the dead – he was around for 40 days – the only thing on their mind was: when would Jesus restore the kingdom? (Acts 1:6). Had they truly taken in what Jesus taught, they would not have asked that question. In any case, Jesus did all that He could to spoon-feed them and break to them as gently as possible that He was going away. Jesus’s task was to help them make the transition from the level of nature to the realm of the Spirit. It would not be easy. Any thought of a transition was nowhere in their thinking.

Jesus introduced the Holy Spirit to them by carefully telling them it was in their interest that He depart. *“It is for your good that I am going away” (John 16:7)*. He talked about “another” Comforter or Counselor coming along (John 14:16). But the very idea of “another” person did not interest them in the slightest. The Greek word is *parakletos* – a word impossible to translate into one word so that it is fully meaningful – whether it be, comforter, advocate, helper, or counselor. The word literally means “one who comes alongside” – which Jesus in fact was to the Twelve at the natural level. He had indeed come alongside them during those three years. They were very happy with Jesus, Jesus in the flesh. The thought of Him leaving them was confusing, upsetting and very painful. So the notion of “another” Paraclete did not bless them at the time. The whole concept of the Holy Spirit was threatening to them.

Do you feel threatened by the Holy Spirit? The disciples of Jesus were threatened by the thought of the Spirit because they liked things just as they were – except for waiting for Jesus to overthrow Rome. They were at ease with the idea of Him setting up His kingdom. The word kingdom to them had a great sound. By the end of three years with Jesus these disciples were firmly in their comfort zones. James and John even hoped to sit at Jesus’ right-hand and left-hand in this kingdom. But they would only think at a natural level, even though Jesus clearly said that His kingdom was not something you see with your naked eye. (Luke 17:20-21).

So, if you feel threatened by the Holy Spirit is it because you are happy in your comfort zones? Are you afraid of what the Holy Spirit might do to you? What He would require of you? What He might ask you to do? Do you think you will lose something if you make yourself vulnerable and totally open to Him? Are you afraid He will embarrass you? Do you think you will lose your identity? Your title? Your position? Do you think you might have to change?

Whether the disciples listen carefully to Jesus, we only know that He kept on speaking. One of the things Jesus said was that the Holy Spirit would remind them of what He had taught them. It was indeed the Holy Spirit who enabled them to go

back to those sermons and discourses – remembering them all by the help of the Spirit. And not only the words but also the very meaning.

There are 21 things every Christian should know about the Holy Spirit. I'll be covering these the next couple of months, summarizing the things the Bible says about the Holy Spirit generally and what Jesus said about the Holy Spirit particularly.

1. The Holy Spirit is God

When Ananias lied to the Spirit, he lied to God (Acts 5:4). *“The Lord is the Spirit”* (2 Corinthians 3:17). We may speak of the deity of the Son, Jesus Christ – that He is God – because He is. And we mentioned the deity of the Father, but I feel the most neglected member of the Trinity is the deity of the Holy Spirit. Do not be afraid to talk directly to the Holy Spirit. There is no jealousy or rivalry in the Trinity. The Father is happy and the Son is happy when you address the Holy Spirit in prayer. After all, the Spirit of God is God the Spirit, what is more, the Trinity is not God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Bible! Just remember: the Holy Spirit is God.

2. The Holy Spirit is a person

Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as “He” (John 14:16; 16:8) and introduced Him as being “another” Paracletos. Never think of the Holy Spirit as an “it”, and “attitude”, or an “influence”. He is a person and has very definite ways. Call them peculiar, eccentric or unique if you like; He has His ways. You may or may not like His ways. But get over it! He is the only Holy Spirit you have! He won't adjust to you; you must adjust to Him.

The Holy Spirit Himself spoke of ancient Israel as not knowing God's “ways” (Hebrews 3:7-10). God was grieved because His own covenant people did not know His ways. They should have. But they didn't. God has His own “ways” and He wants us to know them. And so too is it when it comes to the person of the Holy Spirit. He wants us to know His ways and that the Spirit can be grieved, quenched, and be blasphemed.

The Holy Spirit can also have joy. In Romans 14:17 Paul talked about the joy in the Holy Spirit, whereas Paul referred to the joy of the Holy Spirit in 1 Thessalonians 1:6. It is His own joy. This joy is not necessarily what we feel; it is what He feels. And yet sometimes He invites us to feel what He feels! It is called “gladness” in Acts 2:28. We need to learn the difference between feeling happy because of circumstances and feeling the very “joy of the Lord” (Nehemiah 8:10). There is certainly nothing wrong with our feeling happy because things are working out for us. Indeed, there was “joy in that city” when many who had been paralyzed were healed (Acts 8:7-8). Good news about Gentiles being converted made the disciples “very glad” (Acts 15:3). But the highest level of joy in this planet is when we are allowed to experience the very joy of the Spirit – feeling what He feels. For when the Spirit lets you feel His joy, it is truly inexpressible (1 Peter 1:8).

3. The Holy Spirit is eternal

“How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!” (Hebrews 9:14). The Father, the Son and the Word existed in eternity before God chose to create the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1, John 1:1). “Before the mountains were born You brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting You are God” (Psalms 90:2). God the Father is eternal, and so is the Holy Spirit. When Paul said that in the fullness of time God “sent His Son” (Galatians 4:4), it is because the Father already had a Son. Jesus Christ is the eternal Son. He was the Word until the moment He became “flesh” (John 1:14). That did not happen in Bethlehem but at His conception in Nazareth the moment the Word entered the womb of the Virgin Mary.

The Holy Spirit is equally eternal with the Father and the Word. This is the same Holy Spirit whom Jesus talked about and introduced to His disciples. It is also easy to find mention of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament. He was, in fact, present all the time. Pharaoh discerned the Spirit of God was in Joseph (Genesis 41:38). Bezalel was filled “with the Spirit of God” (Exodus 31:3). The “Spirit of the Lord” was upon Othniel (Judges 3:9-10), Gideon (Judges 6:34), Jephthah (Judges 11:29), Saul (1 Samuel 10:10), and David (1 Samuel 16:13). The Holy Spirit lay behind the ministry of Elijah (1 Kings 18:12, 2 Kings 2:16). The Spirit of God came upon Azarah (2 Chronicles 15:1) and Zechariah (2 Chronicles 24:20). The references of the Holy Spirit go on and on. One of the greatest of all is this: *“Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts”* (Zechariah 4:6)

4. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth (John 14:17; 16:13)

Jesus said of Himself that He is the “way the truth and the life”. As it is impossible for God to lie (Hebrews 6:18), never forget that the Holy Spirit is incapable of lying to you. He will never deceive you. Jesus Himself was full of grace and “truth.” Truth means facts. It means what is reliable. What Jesus does can be proved and will not let you be ashamed. When a miracle was performed, the enemy of truth was forced to say, “we cannot deny it.” (Acts 4:16). Jesus is transparent integrity. Today we sometimes use the expression, “the real deal.” It is what people want to see in leaders, what people long for in relationships – no deceit, no infidelity, but honesty and trustworthiness. That is what we want in a friend – pure gold, the real thing.

Jesus is that. The God of the Bible is that. His words are “trustworthy” (2 Samuel 7:28), “true, and righteous altogether” (Psalms 19:9). And so virtually the 1st thing Jesus said about the Holy Spirit was that He is “*the Spirit of truth*” (John 14:17). This means genuineness, trustworthiness, faithfulness and integrity. It also means theological truth. The Holy Spirit will never lead you to error. What He reveals you can believe and stake your life on.

To put it another way, the Holy Spirit is the opposite of the devil. Jesus said of Satan: “*There is no truth in him....for he is a liar and the father of lies*” (John 8:44). He is incapable of telling the truth. He lives to deceive. Do you know the feeling of being deceived? To know what it is to embrace a person, recommend them, put your ministry on the line for them – then find out you were deceived! It can be very painful. The Holy Spirit, however, will never mislead you. You don’t need to be afraid of Him. He may not be “safe” but He is “good”. (This is what CS Lewis said of Aslan, the lion in “The Chronicles of Narnia”)

5. The Holy Spirit was involved in creation

“*The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters*” (Genesis 1:2). We know that Jesus is depicted as creator. “*Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made*” (John 1:3). “*For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thorns or powers or rules or authorities; all things have been created by Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together*” (Colossians 1:16-17). Some of these lines could describe the Holy Spirit – for example, that He is before all things. The Holy Spirit had a hand in creation, as Jesus did.

6. The Holy Spirit, using people, wrote the Bible

“*All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness*” (2 Timothy 3:16). “*For prophecy never had its origin in the human will of man, but prophets, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit*” (2 Peter 1:21).

Jesus had the same view of Scripture that Paul and Peter held to, namely, that the Holy Spirit wrote the Old Testament. Jesus asked the Pharisees (a question they could not answer), “How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls Him (Christ) “Lord”? For he says, “The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.” If then David calls Him “Lord”, how can he be His son? (Matthew 22:43-45). My point is that David was able to write as he did because the Holy Spirit – in 1000 BC, enabled him to do so. When being persecuted, they turned to the Lord and said, “*You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of Your servant, our father David; why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?*” (Acts 4:25).

One more thing in this connection. The canon of Holy Scripture’s is closed. It is final. Absolute. Incontrovertible. It is God’s complete and final revelation. No word that will come in the future will be equal to the Bible in level of inspiration. This means that any leading, prophetic word, word of knowledge, or vision I may have today must stick to Holy Scripture’s. If it doesn’t, it must be rejected. The main reason that King Saul became yesterday’s man and rejected by God was because he thought he was above the Word of God. When he offered the burnt offerings, he knew he was going right against Moses’s mandate that only the person called of God could offer the burnt offerings. And yet he claimed to have been “compelled” to do it (1 Samuel 13:12). Whenever a person claims to speak for God, claiming “The Lord told me” – and it goes against Scripture, you may safely, comfortably, and most assuredly reject that person’s word, no matter how credible that person may seem!

The Holy Spirit takes the responsibility for the authorship of the Bible. He used people of course. But the buck stops with the Holy Spirit. The same Holy Spirit may speak today at various levels. But no level of inspiration will equal the inspiration of the Bible – ever.

7. The Holy Spirit is our teacher

“He will teach you all things” (John 14:26). “You do not need anyone to teach you. But as His anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit.....remain in Him” (1 John 2:27).

The Holy Spirit is our teacher in basically two ways: directly and indirectly – a most important concept, which I will unpack in detail later. If He teaches us directly, then “you do not need anyone to teach you”. The Holy Spirit is very capable of teaching us in that fashion, and it is a wonderful thing to have happen. The things I was taught directly had been alien to me – I have been taught the opposite of things I now believe. So how did I come by the truth. By the direct teaching of the Holy Spirit.

The indirect teaching refers to the way the Holy Spirit applies what we read or hear. It is when the Spirit applies the Word of God when we read it. It is when the Spirit applies preaching, teaching, a blog, a poem, a loving word of encouragement from a friend or when singing or hearing a song or hymn or chorus.

The Holy Spirit is our best and only reliable teacher. In fact, He is the only teacher who matters. Whatever teaching you hear or read (including this) – whoever the preacher or teacher, if the Spirit does not apply it and witness it to your heart (which He is most capable of doing), you should learn to hold that teaching in a condition of suspended activity – if not dismiss it completely.

Caution: The Holy Spirit only witnesses to the truth. Remember too that the best of teachers make mistakes; they are not infallible. You must be like the people of Berea who “examine the Scriptures (the Old Testament in this case) every day to see if what Paul said was true” (Acts 17:11). In those days Paul was a nobody; he did not have the stature that he does today. Anyone who says to you, “Believe it because I say it,” is doing you no favor and is probably insecure in himself.”

8. The Holy Spirit can be grieved

“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you are sealed for the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4:30). You will recall that the Holy Spirit is a person. He can be grieved. The Greek word *lupeo* can mean ‘get your feelings hurt’. What hurts the Holy Spirit’s feelings? Mainly, bitterness. The next thing Paul says is “*Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as in Christ God forgave you.*” (Ephesians 4:31-32).

The issue is how sensitive the person of the Holy Spirit Himself is. How easy is it to grieve Him, to hurt His feelings. When you think about this – anger, losing your temper, shouting when you get frustrated, cursing, being impatient or speaking unkindly of someone, holding a grudge or pointing the finger – these things grieve the Holy Spirit! But it doesn’t seem to bother us! It should. If we are conscious of the sensitivity of the Holy Spirit, we will develop an acute sensitivity to Him and be able (in ever-increasing measure) to hear His voice. This comes by living in love – keeping no record of wrongs (1 Corinthians 13:5).

Someone once asked Corrie Ten Boom, (author of *The Hiding Place*, Holocaust survivor), Is it true that you are a charismatic? Without saying yes or no she bluntly replied: “First Corinthians 12 and 1 Corinthians 14, but don’t forget 1 Corinthians 13.” It was a shrewd way of saying we need both the gifts and the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

9. The Holy Spirit can be quenched

“Do not quench the Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 5:19). “Do not put out the Spirit’s Fire.” For what is the difference between grieving the Spirit and quenching the Spirit? They almost certainly overlap. But if there is a difference, it is probably this: we grieve the Spirit by our relationships with one another – like judging and unforgiveness; we quench the Spirit when we are prejudiced toward the way the Spirit may be manifesting Himself and by not respecting His presence. It is usually fear that lies behind quenching the Holy Spirit.

Whether we hold that the Holy Spirit does not, will not, or cannot manifest today through the gifts of the Spirit or the miraculous, the Holy Spirit is put to one side before He is given an opportunity to show His power. I do not say God will not require something of you that leads you out of your comfort zone. You may indeed have to leave your comfort zone. But I can promise you this: follow the Holy Spirit by being totally open to Him; you will be forever grateful.

10. The Holy Spirit will be the One who convicts

“He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment” (John 16:8). Only the Holy Spirit can make us see our sin, show us the need for righteousness, and the urgency of the gospel – that there is judgment. A person cannot feel convicted by these things on his or her own. It takes the Spirit to shake us upright.

This is true before and after our conversion. We cannot see our sin or the seriousness of unbelief before our conversion – we are all so self-righteous. It requires the Holy Spirit to make us see the painful truth – that we have grieved Him by self-righteousness and unbelief and are going to have to give an account of our lives at the judgment seat of Christ. Even after conversion we must be aware of self-righteousness. This – is – why John said – writing to Christians, *“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” (1 John 1:8).* Even the Lord’s prayer recalls the petition – forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us (Luke 11:4).

The Spirit shows us our sin but also leads us to see the need for righteousness – of which there are two sorts: 1. Righteousness imparted to us when we believe the gospel (called saving faith) and 2. Righteousness imparted to us when we “continue to live in Him” (called persistent faith) Colossians 2:6.

Righteousness is connected to Jesus’s ascension (*“I am going to the Father, where you can see Me no longer.” John 16:10*) partly because the preaching of the gospel did not begin until Jesus died, rose from the grave, and ascended to the Father’s right hand.

But what is the “Judgment” of which the Spirit promises to convict us? It is a reference to the final day – when the judge of all the earth shall do right (Genesis 18:25). Satan is the cause of all the evil and injustice in this world. The death of Jesus took Satan by surprise (1 Corinthians 2:8) and not only spelled his downfall but also forecast the day of his judgment. Death was defeated by Jesus’s death (Hebrews 2: 14) which is why Jesus said, *“The Prince of this world now stands condemned” (John 16:11).* People often ask, “Is there no justice in this world? Answer: Sometimes there is, but don’t count on it. “Life’s not fair”. But God will one day openly bring about Satan’s demise. God will explain the reason for evil and suffering. Everything will be put under Jesus’s feet. Satan himself will be *“thrown in the lake of burning sulfur.” (Revelation 20:10).* The Holy Spirit convicts of this truth, testifying that Satan stands condemned but also that judgment is coming.

For this reason, we “all” must stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account of all the things done in the body, whether good or bad (2 Corinthians 5:10). The Holy Spirit therefore convicts of the final judgment. The affect this should have on us is godly fear. As soon as possible mentioned standing before the judgment, he mentioned the “fear” of the Lord (knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, 2 Corinthians 5:11). The reference of judgment also points to the neglected teaching of eternal punishment. When Paul witnessed before Felix, he spoke of “judgment to come” (Acts 24:25). Felix was afraid. He trembled. In times of great revival there is often a revival of the teaching of judgment and eternal punishment. And yet only the Holy Spirit can make this truth terrifying. If He does not come alongside when such is preached, people will be unaffected.

Next month: points 11 through 21

We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him (emphasis mine) Acts 5:32.

Let the Holy Spirit Rule!!

Much love

Chief

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Christ’s

Heart

In

Every

Felon