

Empire Church of the Brethren  
Sunday Service Sermons

04 August 2024

Understanding the Holy Spirit

Text: "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever, the Spirit of truth. the world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you." *John 14:16-17.*

We looked at prayer the last few Sundays.

Now we will think about what we need in order to have an effective prayer life.

Without the Holy Spirit active in our lives we will never be the Christian that God intends for us to be.

It is that simple.

Most aspects of the Christian life is simple.

We complicate it to have an excuse for not doing and being what God wants us to be and do.

The first thing I came across in preparing for today was the term religious dropouts.

I have never thought of that term.

They are the shallow ground in the story about the scattered seeds.

And they are shallow because they never allowed the Holy Spirit to take control of their lives.

They never established a pattern of spiritual growth.

They become spiritual and religious casualties.

What I have observed is that they do not get what they want from being a Christian.

God has impressed on me lately that until we change from those who come to get to those who come to give, we never become His person.

By giving I do not mean just our material wealth.

But this giving includes giving God the praise due his name and giving him all of us.

You know what I mean, you hear it every Sunday.

It is said that these people go one of two directions.

They either become lost in the great, faceless multitude upon whom the church has no influence and for whom it has no appeal, or else they fall victim to the persuasive enthusiasm of some religious cult.

Often fault lies with the church, who is extremely concerned about the salvation of these people but fails to follow up with spiritual care and nurturing and leaves them floundering in the cradle as though they, helpless babes, can take care of themselves.

For a few Sundays we are going to lay a foundation for growing quality Christians.

To do this we will explore the person and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

For it is the power of the Spirit that motivates the Christian.

It is the wisdom of the Spirit that sets afire the believer's desire to know more about God, about his Holy Word, and about the role one is to play in God's eternal purpose and plan.

And it is the abiding presence of the Spirit that provides the constant assurance that one is a child of God, beloved of the heavenly Father, and kept eternally in the safe and secure circle of his love.

If you would like to read a good book on this subject the title is: Holy Spirit, are we flammable or fireproof by Reinhard Bonnke.

I have a copy in my office and found it very helpful.

The Holy Spirit as he is presented to us on the pages of the Old Testament.

The Holy Spirit in Creation.

"In the beginning God created the heaven and earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."

In this first reference to the Holy Spirit in the Bible, we find the key to understanding all of his works and ministry among human kind.

The picture of earth that Moses describes here is one of complete, total helplessness.

But something was happening.

God, in the person of his Spirit, saw potential and promise in that whirling, spinning mass of chaos and confusion.

He saw not only what it was, but what it could become.

The Spirit of God moved.

Something started to happen because of the Holy Spirit.

We can liken this action to a hen who broods over her nest.

Life-giving warmth is transmitted from her body.

Thus, in the midst of death, life began to stir.

After creation, the Holy Spirit did not retire.

All through the pages of the Old Testament we read of events in which the Holy Spirit "came upon" men and women to continue the carrying out of God's plan and purpose.

Through his Spirit, God dealt with man as a mother deals with a tiny baby.

Just as a mother makes "love sounds" to her tiny infant, sounds of reassurance, so God began making "love sounds" to sinful humankind.

Then man was brought into God's school, with the Holy Spirit as the schoolmaster, to the threshold of the New Testament era.

It almost staggers the mind to think about how much more the people of Malachi's day knew about God than Abraham knew.

For whereas Abraham was nearly two thousand years away from the birth of Christ, the people of Malachi's day were scarcely four hundred years away.

The Holy Spirit in the Gospels and on the Day of Pentecost.

With the coming of Christ, we see a revelation of the Spirit of God that was never found in the Old Testament.

In Christ, where there was no trace of sin or human hindrance, the Holy Spirit was able to work in mighty power and freedom.

Jesus possessed the Spirit of God "without measure."

The total fullness of the deity of God dwelt in the body of Jesus.

Just before his death, Jesus promised the disciples that he would "send another Comforter" who would abide with them forever.

He told them that this "Comforter" had been with them, but soon he would be in them.

Of course, we know that this came to pass on the Day of Pentecost.

The Holy Spirit's coming to indwell believers is a permanent arrangement.

He does not come in as an overnight guest or a weekend visitor.

He comes to abide as the possessor, the owner of God's property.

Three major things happened on the Day of Pentecost in relation to the Holy Spirit.

First, he became the "resident presence of God" in the world until the end of the age.

He took up his abode in the bodies of believers, whom Paul called "temples of the Holy Spirit."

The second thing that happened on the day of Pentecost was the beginning of the formation of a new body or organism, the church, which the Lord Jesus had promised.

It is the Holy Spirit who adds to this body as individuals receive Christ as Savior.

Third, the Holy Spirit empowered believers to witness, to share boldly with others the reality of their faith in God.

The Holy Spirit's ministry in the Epistles to our day.

The Holy Spirit has a ministry to unbelievers.

There is no way unbelievers could know that they are lost and in need of a Savior apart from the Holy Spirit who opens their eyes to that fact.

The Holy Spirit has a ministry to believers.

He reveals God's will to them for their lives; he makes the Scriptures "come alive" and speaks to their hearts.

He works through believers' conscience to reveal truth to them and to help them make right

decisions.

The Holy Spirit is the constant companion, supporter, and guide for the Christian.

What does all of this say to us?

It says that God the Holy Spirit is the Divine Mover.

He is the agent in the Godhead who moves a holy, all-powerful God toward sinful humankind.

And simultaneously, the Holy spirit moves sinful humans toward God.

The Holy Spirit is also the one who brings about the new birth.

Just as he moved over the angry, chaotic waters of this shapeless, spinning work of dead matter and brought forth life, so he does in the life of sinners, who are "dead in their trespasses and sins."

But he does not stop there.

He continues to work in and through those whom he brings to repentance and redemption.

He refines, teaches, and encourages.

He tenderly fashions, as a potter works with the lump of clay on his wheel.

Never for one second does he leave us alone.

Clearly it has been the design and strategy of Satan from the beginning to distort in every way he can the truth about the Holy Spirit, as that truth is revealed in Holy Scripture.

The result has been that the teaching concerning the Holy Spirit has been subjected to everything from bizarre emotionalism to cold intellectualism.

Yet in-between those two ridiculous and unscriptural extremes, there is a beautiful, vital, and essential teaching concerning the Holy Spirit.

Throughout the Bible he is revealed to us.

Let us not neglect His vital ministry.

It is for us to acknowledge him, and release him to do his work in our lives.

Then and only then can we become the person of God that God hopes for us to be.