

John 14:16-18
16:7-11

It is disturbing that so little emphasis is being placed on the Holy Spirit in the preaching, teaching and singing of today. In many churches months and years have elapsed without a single sermon being delivered which specifically honored the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. On very few subjects do Christians have more inadequate and unworthy views than on that of the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

It is certainly fitting that we should devote our attention during this service to the ministry of the Holy Spirit and our dependency on Him. The great importance of the subject of the Holy Spirit may be judged from the fact that He is referred to specifically about eighty times in the Old Testament and over two hundred times in the New Testament. Therefore, we should examine most carefully what the Word of God says about the Holy Spirit.

Our Lord was about to leave His disciples to return to heaven. Their hearts were troubled greatly because He was going to leave them. They wondered how they would be able to live when the light of their lives had gone out, and how they could ever face the world without His supporting presence. They were afraid that nobody could ever fill the place which He had occupied in their hearts and lives. As they thought of His departure despair gripped their hearts.

To dispel the fears of His disciples Christ made it clear to them that it was necessary to have a change of ministry from the visible to the invisible, from the external to the indwelling and from the occasional to the perpetual. He said, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever" (John 14:16). Then He added, "I will not leave you comfortless (orphans)." An orphan needs someone to comfort and strengthen him when his parent has died. Even so, Christ promised to send the Holy Spirit to comfort and sustain His disciples while they were passing through the darkness which would follow His death. During His ministry in their midst our Lord had guarded, protected, encouraged and guided His disciples, but now that He was leaving them He assured them that the Holy Spirit was coming to assume the responsibility of being another guardian of the same kind. He would come to take the place of Christ and to teach Christians the will of the Lord for them and to guide them in the doing of that will.

Our churches are now confronted with a world-situation which is without a parallel in history. It has grave possibilities, but it also presents unparalleled opportunities for spiritual progress. On the one hand our world is full of industrial, political, intellectual, social and religious unrest. It is a world whose urgent and supreme need is God. On the other hand is Christ, the manifestation of God, the Redeemer of men, the solution of every problem and the satisfier of every needy heart. Why, then, is the adequate supply not communicated to the need? It is simply because God's children are not recognizing, yielding to and obeying the Holy Spirit, the neglected member of the Godhead.

I. The Personality of the Holy Spirit.

A person is a being who knows, feels and wills. A person can be approached or shunned, trusted or doubted, adored or insulted, loved or hated.

Is the Holy Spirit a person or merely an influence? The Holy Spirit is much more than a benevolent influence. He is a person. If the Holy Spirit is not a person, language has no meaning. God's Word makes it perfectly clear that the Holy Spirit is a person. Christ repeatedly used the masculine pronouns "he" and "him" in speaking of the Holy Spirit. Throughout the Word of God personal pronouns are used when reference is made to the Holy Spirit, personal qualities are ascribed to Him, personal deeds are performed by Him and a personal office is held by Him. Therefore, nobody should ever refer to the Holy Spirit as "it."

A realization that the Holy Spirit is a person is of the highest importance to a Christian from the standpoint of worship. To think of the Holy Spirit as an impersonal influence is to rob Him of the honor which is due to Him. It is also important from the standpoint of experience. Since the Holy Spirit is as much a person as is God the Father or as is Christ the Son, one can never be effective in Christian service until he discards the idea that the Holy Spirit is only a divine influence. He is not a mere "something" but He is a divine "Someone." Moreover, this realization that the Holy Spirit is a person is important from the standpoint of practice. If you think of Him as a mere influence, then your thought will be, "How can I get hold of that influence and use it?" If you think of Him as a divine person, which He is, then your thought will be, "How can the Holy Spirit get hold of me and use me?"

The Holy Spirit spoke of Himself in personal terms. He said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" (Acts 13:2). That really means, "Put a ring around these two men; circle them off. I have something to say to them, something I want to do through them."

II. The Deity of the Holy Spirit.

Proof of the deity of the Holy Spirit is found in the divine names that were given to Him.

Associations of deity are His. These associations are revealed in the baptismal formula: "I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." In II Corinthians 13:14 the three Persons of the Godhead are linked together in the well-known and oft-repeated benediction: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all."

Attributes of deity are His. Here are some of them: He is eternal. "How much more shall the blood of Christ, Who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:14). He is omniscient. "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." (I Corinthians 2:10). He is omnipresent. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" (Psalm 139:7). He is omnipotent. "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you" (Matthew 12:28).

Actions of deity are His. The Holy Spirit does things that only a divine Person could do. He holds a personal office which could not be held by any mere influence. He came to be to the disciples, and to us, what the personal companionship of Christ had been to the Christians during His ministry on earth. Our Lord told His disciples that He was going to leave them, but that "another Comforter" of like kind would take His place in a very real sense.

When Peter rebuked Ananias for holding back part of the price of the land he had sold he said to him, "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?.....Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God" (Acts 5:3-4). What is said here, then, is that the Holy Spirit is God.

III. The Work of the Holy Spirit.

1. With the unsaved.

(1) He bears witness to the truth regarding Jesus Christ.

"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me" (John 15:26).

(2) He illuminates the understanding.

(3) He convicts.

"Convict" as used here means to bring to light all the facts which prove to man that he is out of harmony with God, that his guilt is inexcusable, and that God's demands must be satisfied or he will be punished.

Of what does the Holy Spirit convict the unsaved? In John 16:8 we read, "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." According to this verse the Holy Spirit convicts of three things:

a. Of sin committed.

Our Lord indicated the nature of that sin and described it as failure to believe in Him. "Of sin, because they believe not on me" (John 16:9). That is the cardinal sin of mankind. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict the sinner of this particular sin, and reveal to him that he is already condemned before God. He cannot do His convicting work unless Christ is preached and offered to men as Saviour and Lord. When we preach Christ crucified and offer Him to guilty sinners as the only Saviour, we are uttering a message which the Holy Spirit can use. The Holy Spirit is pleased to use any message which exalts Christ in such a way that it is possible for people to be convicted of their unbelief. No human power can convict any sinner. Real conviction for sin can only be produced by the Holy Spirit. How important that we realize this in our soul-winning efforts today!

b. Of righteousness imputed.

When Christ was here among men He exhibited a life of perfect righteousness. He was in right relationship with God and with men. He always did the things that were well-pleasing to the Father. If the Holy Spirit is to convict men of their need of that righteousness which Christ alone can give, He can only use those messages which point to the perfect life of the Son of God. When we uplift Christ we make it possible for the Holy Spirit to convict the unsaved of righteousness which He alone can give.

c. Of judgment accomplished.

"Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged" (John 16:11). God passed judgment upon Satan and sin in the death of Christ on the cross.

(4) He persuades the convicted one to believe.

After he has heard the gospel of Christ, the Holy Spirit prompts faith unto salvation. In other words, He persuades the sinner to receive the salvation which was planned by the Father and provided by the Son.

(5) He regenerates.

The Holy Spirit regenerates or imparts the divine nature to human beings. Christ said, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). Man may convert, and frequently does, but only the Holy Spirit can regenerate.

2. With the saved.

(1) He seals.

"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy spirit of promise" (Ephesians 1:13). Sealed means stamped as God's own possession.

Here is the inter-linking chain of divine security. The sealer is God the Father, the one who is sealed is the believer in Christ, the seal is the Holy Spirit and the One in Whom the believer is sealed is Christ.

When the Holy Spirit regenerates a soul, God shuts it up in Christ and it is sealed there by the Holy Spirit. What a wonderful position in which to be! There is not enough power on earth to molest that soul. To declare that there is would be to affirm that Satan has more power than the Holy Spirit.

(2) He gives assurance of salvation.

"The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:16).

(3) He indwells the believer.

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (I Corinthians 3:16). "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (I Corinthians 6:19).

"O gift of gifts! O grace of grace,
That God should condescend
To make my heart His dwelling-place,
And be my daily Friend."

(4) He strengthens us.

"That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man" (Ephesians 3:16). Our supreme need is that strength which comes from the Holy Spirit, Who is the source of all spiritual energy.

- (5) He helps us in prayer.
"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26).
- (6) He guides us in the study of God's Word.
"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). Human wisdom gives us knowledge about the Word of God, but the Holy Spirit, Who is the author of the Scriptures and our Interpreter, gives us the understanding of the Word itself. Always seek His guidance in your study of it.
- (7) He directs in the Lord's work.
"As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away" (Acts 13:2-3). Our receiving the guidance of the Holy Spirit is conditioned upon a sincere desire to know God's will and a fixed determination to do His will when it is revealed.

The Holy Spirit always guides us in harmony with God's Word. Some say they "felt led" to do what they did, which was contrary to the teaching of the Bible. Such leading was of the devil and not of the Holy Spirit. In directing in the Lord's work the Holy Spirit illuminates our minds, purifies our desires and strengthens our wills.

- (8) He comforts us.
"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever" (John 14:16). "I will not leave you comfortless (orphans) I will come to you" (John 14:18). Did you ever go into a home where there was no mother, and where the father had just been laid in a casket? The little children did not know what to do or where to go. They were left alone. But the Lord Jesus did not leave His disciples alone as orphans, but sent the Holy Spirit to comfort them.
- (9) He empowers us for service.
"Ye shall receive power upon the coming of the Holy Spirit upon you" (Acts 1:8). It takes power to live dynamically, to overcome temptation, to grow in likeness to Christ, to keep sweet under criticism, to forgive enemies and to witness effectively to unbelievers.

The source of this power or ability is the Holy Spirit. The greatest need of every child of God today is strength from the Holy Spirit. Christians have worldly knowledge, culture and talents, but they lack spiritual power. Churches have splendid physical equipment, educational qualifications and opportunities, ample organizations, numerous plans and excellent programs, but are woefully lacking in power. As we think of their powerlessness,

we are reminded of the incident when Thomas Aquinas visited Rome and was shown the gorgeousness of the papal palace, and the Pope remarked: "Well, Thomas, the church in our day cannot say: 'Silver and gold have I none.'" "No," replied Aquinas, "neither can she say: 'In the name of Jesus, rise up and walk.'" The Holy Spirit alone can give us the power which we need for the advancement of the Lord's cause. You cannot separate the Holy Spirit and power. Our purpose as Christians is to witness for Christ and to make Him known to others. This purpose can never be accomplished unless we honor the Holy Spirit by a sincere recognition of our dependency on Him. Such a dependency will produce in us humility, thanksgiving and confidence.

"Of to reflect His grace,
Causing the world to know
Love that shall flow,
Till others may know,
Jesus revealed in me."

(10) He dispenses special gifts.

"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." (I Corinthians 12:7-11). These special gifts are granted only to those who can be trusted to use them solely for the glory of God and for the fulfillment of His purpose.

IV. Sins Against The Holy Spirit.

1. On the part of the unsaved.

(1) Resisting the Holy Spirit.

"Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye" (Acts 7:51).

(2) Blaspheming The Holy Spirit.

"Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come" (Matthew 12:31-32). "But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness" (Mark 3:29).

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is the unpardonable sin. Blasphemy is a sin of the tongue. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is knowingly, deliberately, wilfully and maliciously ascribing to Satan the work which is wrought by the Holy Spirit. It is a sin of the unregenerate only.

2. On the part of the saved.

(1) Lying to the Holy Spirit.

When people come forward in church services and profess to forsake their worldliness and sins and then do not do so they lie to the Holy Spirit. To profess to give up things for Christ's sake and then hold on to them is to lie to the Holy Spirit. Ananias pretended to give to the Lord the entire receipts from the property which he sold, but in reality held back part of it. Peter asked him, "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?" (Acts 5:3).

(2) Quenching the Holy Spirit.

This sin is committed by Christians who do what the Spirit has forbidden or refuse to do what He has commanded. Failure to respond favorably to the calls of the Holy Spirit for service quenches Him. When the Holy Spirit prompts you to do a certain thing and you decline to do it you quench Him. You also quench the Holy Spirit when you attempt to do the Lord's work without depending on Him. "Quench not the Spirit" (I Thessalonians 5:19).

(3) Grieving the Holy Spirit.

"And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30). "Grieve" is a love word. One can anger an enemy, but he cannot grieve him. Only one who loves can be grieved. To speak of grieving the Holy Spirit is to acknowledge His love for us. Grieve means to plunge into deep sorrow or to cause acute pain. The Holy Spirit can be grieved by what we think, say and do. We can grieve Him by unholy imaginations, impure thoughts, corrupt words and sinful actions. The Holy Spirit is grieved deeply when we disregard or ignore Him. Grieving the Holy Spirit deprives us of happiness, impoverishes our lives and injures our usefulness.

V. Being Filled With The Holy Spirit.

"And be not drunk with wine, wherein in excess; but be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). Here are two clear and definite commands from God to all His children. He only expects us to do one thing with them, namely, to obey them. These commandments were spoken for our good and God's glory. Our obedience to them is a test of our love for God. Are we obeying them? Most of us obey the first one, but we disobey the second. Any Christian who is not filled with the Spirit is living a life of disobedience and largely one of fruitlessness.

Being filled with the Holy Spirit is not something mystical and mysterious. God does not mystify His children. It is something that is very real and practical. What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit? It means the possession and mastery of the human spirit by the Holy Spirit. It is the human personality brought under the control of the Holy Spirit. That which entirely takes possession of the mind is said to fill it. One is filled with the Spirit when the Holy Spirit has absolute possession and control of him.

When the Holy Spirit fills a person, He enlightens the mind so that divine truth can be comprehended; He purifies the affections and fixes them on Christ; and He reinforces the weak will, thus enabling him to

do the will of God. We shall never know the possibilities of our re-deemed personalities unless we yield ourselves in glad, full and unreserved surrender to His control.

The three controls of the soul are Satan, Self and the Spirit. The unregenerate person is under the dominion of Satan. The carnal or unsurrendered Christian is under the control of Self. The spiritual Christian is under the mastery of the Holy Spirit. When He is in possession and control our delights, discernments and decisions conform to the will of God.

As to the fulness of the Holy Spirit, there is considerable doctrine lying under the cover of grammar in this verse.

This verb is in the present tense; therefore, this is a present blessing. It is not a blessing to which we are bidden to look back. Nor is it something to which we are to look forward. It is a present blessing which we may experience and enjoy now. It is the privilege of the Christian to keep on being filled with the Holy Spirit; God continually pouring out His fulness into you, and you continually receiving that fulness, and transmitting it into your personality and character.

This verb is in the imperative mood, "Be filled." It is not a suggestion, or a proposition that you may just take into consideration. It is an urgent command which does not leave you any option. It is just as imperative for the Christian to be filled with the Spirit as it is that he not get drunk.

This verb is in the passive voice. We are not bidden to fill ourselves with the Holy Spirit, but to "be filled." Being filled with the Spirit is not something you have to do, but it is something that you have to let God do. There is a difference between indwelt by the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit. It is the difference between Him being a resident and the President.

This command to be filled with the Spirit is to every Christian. The Spirit-filled life is the prerogative of every believer. Being filled with the Spirit is not some special blessing which God has reserved for some of His children only. He does not have any favorites. He did not give this command without expecting obedience to it. No Christian has any right to set this command aside as if it were of no importance or consequence. To do so would render the guilty one powerless. The Holy Spirit is the source of all spiritual power. Being filled with the Holy Spirit is not a once-and-for-all experience which never needs to be repeated. Dr. F. B. Meyer used to pray each morning, "O God, fill me for today with the Holy Spirit." There will be a fresh filling for every emergency.

How can we become Spirit-filled Christians? By wanting to be, by renouncing our sins, by praying to be and by obeying Christ's orders. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him" (Luke 11:13)? "And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey him" (Acts 5:32).

What are the results of being filled with the Holy Spirit? One result is happiness. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19). The Spirit-filled life is one of great joy. The Holy Spirit removes bitterness, gloom and sadness, and He gives you a song of joy in the heart. Another result is gratitude. "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5:20). Our thanks will be continuous. A third result of being filled with the Spirit is humility. "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God" (Ephesians 5:21). A Spirit-filled believer is submissive and never self-assertive. A fourth result of being filled with the Holy Spirit is power. "Ye shall receive power, upon the coming of the Holy Spirit upon you" (Acts 1:8). The reason that Christians are ineffective in their witnessing is because they have ignored and not been filled with the Holy Spirit. Another glorious result of being filled with the Spirit is fruitfulness. When the Holy Spirit fills a Christian, he bears fruit, but there cannot be any fruit apart from Him. The flesh can produce works, but it cannot produce fruit. Works can be produced by men, but only the Holy Spirit can produce fruit. If we are to bear fruit, dependence on the Holy Spirit is an absolute necessity.