

09.18.11 / Acts 1:4-8 and 2:1-12

PLEASE NOTE:

For the foreseeable future, the Curriculum Guide will be a little different from our typical format. We are trying some new approaches as we make the shift to match the schedules of the Durham and Raleigh East campuses in our weekly study of Scripture. The guide will be closely linked with the actual sermon and will include sermon notes, application questions, and a section on prayer.

Sermon Notes

The oft debated doctrine of the Holy Spirit is nothing to shy away from. We can and should openly and freely look at and discuss the Scriptures where they speak of God's Holy Spirit, for in this we will see more clearly a picture of who God is and what He does, which ultimately informs who we are in Him and what He will do through us as His people. In the Bible we see that the Holy Spirit is sent so that the work of God might be accomplished. We see the Spirit empower ordinary men and women to do His bidding and so draw others to the Father, sometimes through what seems miraculous, other times through the most mundane of daily activities. As agents of Christ, ambassadors of our God, we are at the front lines of two opposing kingdoms, the kingdom of evil, where the prince of the world reigns for a limited period of time, and the kingdom of God, where God Himself reigns. At the collision of these two worlds there is great conflict, and for those whom the Spirit of God indwells there is immense opportunity to represent the King we serve and love.

In this collision we are sent as ambassadors of God, setting up our lives as outposts where everything that's true about God's kingdom is true about us as well, such that our lives more and more accurately reflect that of our King, drawing others in to the peace and hope therein. This affords us the opportunity to serve as rescue workers who take the resources of God's kingdom to those people who need them and who don't yet know God. Doing so means entering the conflict as warriors who wield weapons of love, mercy, and forgiveness against the powers of darkness, weapons that display the mercy and grace of our God, again drawing the lost to the Father.

Because the history of global church's teaching on the Holy Spirit has been so varied, our own capacity to explain the Spirit and our own experience of His work is correspondingly weak. We see in Scripture that God is a triune God, that the Spirit of God is divine, one with the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God sent by the Father to those who are in Christ, and this is the same Spirit of Christ that we see referenced in 1 Peter 1 who is speaking through the prophets of old. The oneness of the Trinity is absolute, and so we can be confident that when we are redeemed, saved by Christ, His Spirit is at work both in this salvation and in our lives ongoing.

Along the continuum of Holy Spirit theology, there are two major sides of the spectrum: 1) the side that says that there are certain things that the Spirit cannot do any longer (cessationism, which believes that the miracle gifts of tongues, prophecy, and healing ended with the death of the twelve apostles), and 2) the side that says that the vast majority of our focus should be on the Spirit and on having experiences related to His work (commonly – and loosely – known as the extreme charismatic movement). The argument against cessationism is rooted in God's sovereignty, which leads one to the understanding that God can do what He wants to do, when He wants to do it, that He is in no way limited to doing His work within a particular time period or in a certain way that humans can fully understand. The argument against the extreme charismatic movement, which often leads people to question their and others' salvation due to a lack of seemingly miraculous work at the hands of the people in question, is that when the focus is so heavily on the fruit or the experience, people are often lead toward a worship of these things rather than the worship of God, or a worship of God's power, rather than the worship of God Himself. As a side note that relates to these two extremes, it should be noted that the work of God's Holy Spirit is not contingent upon our recognition of it. In other words, there

will be times when we see Him working almost visibly and tangibly, and there will be times when it appears that He is silent and not at work, but when we look back over our lives, we will likely be amazed to discover His handiwork that we sometimes couldn't see at one particular moment.

In looking at Scripture, while there are many things that the Spirit of God does, it's interesting to note the following ten specific actions:

- Romans 8 / He establishes and bears witness to our intimate relationship with God the Father through the gospel
- Mark 13 and Luke 12 / He helps us speak when we are in precarious situations and need to bear witness to the gospel
- Psalm 143, John 14-16, Acts 9, 13, and 15, 1 Corinthians 2, and 1 John 5 / He teaches us and reminds us what we need to know with respect to the gospel, that He is our Comforter, our Advisor, our Encourager, our Strength, and He guides us in the way we need to go
- Acts 1, Romans 8, and Ephesians 3 / He empowers our witness and makes our witness effective to the respect of the gospel
- John 16 and 1 Thessalonians 5 / He convicts people of their sin with respect to the gospel
- Romans 8 / He empowers the process of putting away our sin, which is against the gospel
- 2 Corinthians 3, Galatians 4, 5, and 6 / He sanctifies us, bearing fruit of attitudes and actions, which reflect God the Father in the gospel
- 2 Corinthians 3 / He gives life and freedom in the gospel
- By the power of the Spirit, we abound in hope because our God is a God of hope who fills His children with all joy and peace as a result of the work of Jesus
- He gives people particular gifts for the edification of the body and for the continuation of the mission of God, both natural gifts and supernatural gifts

God's Spirit was sent to accomplish the mission of God – IT'S NOT JUST FOR US. Though He is the Comforter, the Advocate, the Teacher, He does not serve only us, but rather He also empowers us so that others may be served BY US IN HIS NAME. This is the most exciting news ever, that God Himself has chosen to live inside of those who love Him, to make His home with us, that we may be empowered to tell others the good news of His love for them.

Application Questions (these suggested questions are in no particular order)

- What in your life is the clearest evidence of the work of God's Spirit in you (one interesting take on this is to answer this question on behalf of one another, in other words, asking the question, "What is the clearest evidence of the work of God's Spirit have you seen in ONE ANOTHER'S lives?")
- If you are in Christ, you've been empowered – what might be keeping you from simply GOING as the Spirit sends you?
- What amazes you most about the Holy Spirit's work in our lives?
- How will this information help you worship the Lord more fully with your actions?

Prayer

- That the Spirit would use you, giving you the gifts and abilities you need to accomplish the mission of God
- For unity among the body of Christ as we examine the doctrine of the Holy Spirit (the Spirit unifies us, so this is a particularly relevant prayer)
- That we would stay so focused on God that we are no longer tempted to worship emotions, experience, or power, but rather God and God alone