

A Church Alive II: The Person and Purpose of the Holy Spirit

I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak, and He will tell you things to come. – John 16:12-13

Recap of Previous Lesson

While the disciples had their own thoughts of what Jesus' return would mean, Jesus was preparing them for what new life was really going to amount to. His life change in them would move them from being a people looking for God to do something for them, to a people ready and equipped to do something for God.

Jesus could have told the disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit, but he chose to have them focus on the "promise" of the Father. This way, it was not dependent upon the actions of the disciples, but upon the strength of the one giving the promise, God Himself.

The Advantage

Jesus was in the midst of giving the disciples some hard things to consider: the world would hate them, persecute them, put them out of synagogues, and even kill them. On top of this, their friend and teacher would be tortured, crucified, and killed. Yes, he did say he would be raised the third day, but they had to get through the other stuff first.

*But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and one of you asks me, "Where are you going?" But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth. **It is to your advantage that I go away...** John 16:5-7a*

The disciples, considering everything, were too full of sorrow to respond to Jesus. Sadness stopped them from really hearing what Jesus was fully bringing to them. Jesus both recognized and identified that in them: "...you cannot bear them now." With us, He is just as gracious, to know when we are ready to hear what He has for us, and when we are not. Whether it is the sadness of leaving our comfort zone or the fear of what that thing might bring, our own emotional or mental state can prevent us from hearing what God has planned for us. For some of us, God wants to move us into something new, but because of our emotional response to it, we are unable to hear it – *unable to bear it*. Jesus needed to equip the disciples to hear what it was that they needed, just as he is doing with us.

What to Expect from the Holy Spirit

Guide into All Truth

The disciples could not take in all of the information Jesus was giving, yet they were going to need all of it, just as we do. Our life in Christ is not simply to be based on our thinking of what the kingdom of God is, but on all that God would reveal about the kingdom. The Holy Spirit's role was to bring the disciples into "all truth". Not simply into all facts, but into the "whole realm of truth".

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him... Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel. – Zechariah 3:1,3

It was true that Joshua was standing before the Lord, and it was true that his garments were dirty. Satan was standing next to him, coming against him. Did he have cause to do so? In our mind, yes, because Joshua was not clean. There was truth that Joshua was standing in, and could have succumbed to: "it makes sense that I would be going through a battle because I am not clean". Job faced the same type of battle in his life when his life turned upside down. There was a "truth" that it was due to Job's fear:

For the thing I greatly feared has come upon me, and what I dreaded has happened to me. – Job 3:25

While these things were "true" in themselves, they were not "all truth". Sometimes it is a matter of perspective, a different viewpoint, or the mind and heart of someone else that gives us an understanding of a greater truth. In Job's life, God spoke and gave him both perspective and a personal encounter with God. In Zechariah's life, God not only spoke, but also acted upon his behalf:

Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, "Take away the filthy garments from him." And to him He said, "See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes. And I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head, and they put the clothes on him. And the Angel of the Lord stood by. – Zechariah 3:4-5

The truth of the situation was not just that Joshua had iniquity. It was that God desired to cleanse him, and took action to do so. It is this type of "fullness of truth" that the Holy Spirit is guiding us into.

*Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, **who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?**" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned but **that the works of God should be revealed in him.**" – John 9:1-3*

The truth of the man's blindness could not be denied, but the fullness of the truth that Jesus revealed is that this was not an opportunity to assign sin, but rather to see

the work of God revealed in his life. **This is why the Holy Spirit was sent:** to reveal the larger truth that God wants to reveal His works in our lives.

How is this shown at Pentecost?

But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh. Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams...' – Acts 2:14-17

Pentecost: Why Wait?

So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." And when he had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." – John 20:21-23

Jesus died, was raised, and had shown himself to the disciples. In this conversation, he gives the command to "receive the Holy Spirit", but then later he tells them to wait for the promise. Did they not receive the Holy Spirit when he commanded, or was there a deeper truth that he was trying to reveal?

The Feasts of Israel

When God brought Israel out of Egypt, he had Moses establish certain feasts. Each of the feasts had significance to either a specific event or time in Israel's existence. The feasts started with Passover, Unleavened Bread, then First Fruits, and then 50 days after First Fruits there was the Feast of Weeks, also known as Pentecost. Rabbinic scholarship believes that 50 days after God freed Israel from Egypt, Moses came down Mount Sinai with the Law. The Law was meant to be the vehicle by which mankind would connect with God and fulfill his will. For years, Israel celebrated these feasts showing God's provision to them. For Israel, this was truth, but for God it was not the entire truth. God used this to show a greater fulfillment:

<p>Passover: The sacrifice of the lamb, the blood spread on the doorpost, lintel and poured out at the feet, and death "passing over" those who were marked (sealed)</p>	<p>Jesus sacrificed on Passover as the Lamb of God. By his blood death no longer has a hold on us.</p>
<p>Unleavened Bread: also known as the bread of affliction. Identifying with the affliction Israel went through before gaining their freedom from Egypt; leaven represented sin, so unleavened bread represented the life of God as well</p>	<p>Jesus was sinless sacrifice. Said to remember him as often as we ate the bread and drank the wine. Identifying with suffering before freedom</p>

First Fruits: Bringing the first of the harvest as an offering before the Father.	Jesus is the “firstborn from the dead” (Colossians 1:18)
Pentecost: God bringing his Law to his people, the mechanism for living the life he designed for them individually and as a nation	Jesus giving the Holy Spirit to dwell in people, being the mechanism for living the life God has for us

God’s Pictures

It would be easy to look at some things that God does as just being truths in and of themselves, but a closer study shows that God has reasons for doing everything that He does and says. Jesus did not tell the disciples to wait for the promise because they needed to prepare, to get their hearts right, or any other reason: it was because God designated the day of Pentecost as the specific day that He would fulfill His promise. What’s more, God deepened the picture: on the day that Moses brought the Law, he found Aaron and the entire nation worshipping a golden calf. That day the judgment of God fell, and 3000 were killed. Following Jesus’ resurrection and ascension, when the Holy Spirit fell, 3000 were made alive.

The Holy Spirit was sent to guide us into “all truth”... not “all truths”, or all of the individual truths, but the fullness of truth that God reveals. By understanding and living within the fullness of the truth of God, we are able to receive all that He wants to do in our lives.

Reflection:

- How much of your life is based upon the truth that you know, or half-truths?
- When you look at your own life, do you see your “dirty garments” or do you see what God would do with those garments? How about when you look at others’ lives?
- Do you think that the things that God is doing in your life have a greater purpose or a deeper meaning?
- What does God have you waiting for? Are you growing impatient? Do you know why you are waiting? Can you be content to simply follow His lead in this, even though you don’t know why?

Next Week

- Being sealed by the Holy Spirit
- Being a candle in a room