

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE GOSPEL
Acts 1:8

Intro: Tonight as we gather for the Lord's Supper, we need to be reminded that we do this in remembrance of our Lord Jesus Christ. That purpose was clarified by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11 when he said that in the Lord's Supper we "shew forth," i.e., proclaim, the Lord's death. Why did Christ die, and what place is His death given in Scripture? "Christ died for our sins," said Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:3, and there he identified Christ's death with the Gospel. We cannot and are not preaching the Gospel unless we proclaim the death of Christ.

So, in remembering Christ we are to remember His death, and in remembering His death we are remembering the Gospel.

Therefore we can say that a major purpose of the Lord's Supper is to bring us back to the Gospel. And I think we can see how ludicrous it is for church people to be very religious about wanting to "take communion" while often denying the chief significance of the Supper itself!

Now in observing the Lord's Supper we are proclaiming a message --the message of the Gospel. We are shewing it forth. And this is the work that we as believers are to give our lives to. We are to live to preach the Gospel of Christ, the good news concerning Christ.

But it is a difficult work, the most difficult work there is. That is one reason so few Christians are actually involved in it. We can also say that it is even a dangerous work. The death of Christ Himself tells us that. And many, throughout the history of the Church, have given their lives for the sake of this message. We saw this morning in 2 Cor. 6 what it cost Paul to be a Gospel preacher. And so again we see this reason that the Lord had for instituting this Supper. We not only need to be reminded of our responsibility toward the world, but we need this time to be encouraged and to be strengthened to carry on with this mission of ours in the world.

The nature of this work indicates one thing (among others): it is that we need help! The Lord knew that we would need help, and so He has given us the greatest help possible in the Person of the Holy Spirit. In fact, according to Luke in the Gospel of Luke, and in the book of Acts, it was concerning the Holy Spirit and our witness in the world that the Lord Jesus spoke His last words before ascending back to heaven. The power of the Holy Spirit was, according to our Lord, essential for this ministry; it cannot be accomplished without Him!

(Read Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:6-8.)

We do not need to tarry for the Holy Spirit, as those early

believers did, because He has been given to the Church. But we do need to recognize our need of Him, and to depend upon Him, to know how He works. And there is no better place to learn that than at the Lord's Table.

Let me speak just briefly tonight about three things in connection with the Holy Spirit and the Gospel.

I. THE ADEQUACY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

It is indicated in that word, "power." It is "power" which is inherent in the Holy Spirit. It is a power which we do not have. It is His. It is divine power. It is the only power that can enable us to accomplish the work that the Lord has commissioned us to do!

Cf. Acts 1:8.

Therefore, the more we are filled with the Holy Spirit, dominated and controlled by Him, the greater will be our effectiveness in this work. We might just as well try to run our cars without gas as to try to evangelize the people of this world without the Holy Spirit.

But the power of the Holy Spirit is completely adequate. We do not need to go beyond Him.

II. THE DISTINCTIVE WORKS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN SALVATION.

This will help us to understand why we need the Holy Spirit so desperately. Let me mention three works of the Spirit which have to do with salvation.

A. Conviction.

You and I will never get the attention of the people to whom we speak unless the Spirit of God brings conviction to their hearts. We cannot do this.

Cf. John 16:7-11.

Nobody is ever saved who is not first convicted in their hearts, and no one can convict them except the Holy Spirit. For the moment I am not concerned about how He does it, just that He alone can do it!

B. Regeneration.

This means the giving of eternal life, being born again. Cf. John 3:3. We can tell people about eternal life, but we cannot give them eternal life. This is a work of the Holy Spirit, and of no one else!

Our purpose in witnessing to people is that they might be born into the family of God, into the kingdom of God. But all we can do is to pray and to spread the message; the Holy Spirit must take it from there or our work will be in vain.

C. Indwelling.

The Holy Spirit in the hearts of those who believe is God's guarantee that the work will not stop, that it will not fail!

Cf. Eph. 1:13, 14.

We can see people profess faith in Christ, and then often they do not continue. That is because it has not been a work of the Spirit. If the Spirit convicts and regenerates and indwells, there is no possibility that the work can fail.

And so we see that this work requires the power and blessing of the Holy Spirit.

But let me mention a final thing:

III. THE MANNER OF THE SPIRIT'S WORK IN OUR WITNESSING.

Obviously we have a vital part in the salvation of men. We do not save them. We cannot convict them. We do not indwell them--and it would not help them if we could. But ours is the task of getting the message to them.

Let me briefly illustrate the nature of an effectiveness witness from Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. The 4th verse makes it clear that they were filled with the Holy Spirit, i.e., they were controlled, dominated by the Holy Spirit. They became the Spirit's instruments for a for a mighty work.

What can we say about Peter's sermon? Let me point out two things: (1) how he spoke; (2) what he said. And I will only do this in a very briefly, sketchy way.

A. How did Peter speak?

1. With boldness.

What a change in Peter! There is no evidence in the Gospels that he ever did anything like this. He was not a public speaker; he was a fisherman. It is true--he had preached, but never like this. And notice what he said in vv. 23, and 36. All fear was gone!

What else can we say about his speaking?

2. With simplicity.

This is not a difficult sermon to understand. Peter spoke in language that the people knew. We need to be simple in clear in talking to people about the death of Christ.

Spurgeon attributed this one thing to his unusual success in preaching the Gospel--that he was simple and clear and easily understood.

Those of you who have small children, or who are teaching small children, are getting the best training possible in witnessing. If you do not talk in simple language the children will not understand what you are talking about. The same is true of the most educated adult in the world. The Gospel has a strange ring to his ears, and therefore it needs to be simple.

But one other thing:

3. With assurance.

You cannot read this sermon by Peter, nor could you have listened to it, without being assured that Peter knew and believed that his message was true. There is no uncertainty here. Peter did not give people the impression that this was something that they might try and might be helped by it; he made it clear that this was the remedy for their souls' needs, AND THE ONLY REMEDY!

He spoke with assurance. Let us speak the same way.

But . . .

B. What did he say?

Let me mention two features of his sermon, although I know that much more could be pointed out. Two things, however, are very, very clear.

1. He made much use of the Word of God.

He spoke from Joel. He spoke from Psalms 16. He spoke from Psalm 110. And he did not just tell them things about those passages of Scripture, but he actually quoted it to them. He knew that most of

them did not know the Scriptures, and that they would not take the time to look them up, and so he quoted the Word to them. (What an argument for Scripture memory!) And Peter also knew this: that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." And he wanted them to believe, and so he gave them the Word. The Word is what the Holy Spirit uses to impart faith to unbelievers. Therefore, we need to use the Word, too.

But there is one more thing:

2. Peter spoke about Jesus Christ.

Notice how much there is about Christ in this sermon. It all has to do with Him--Who He is, and what He had done.

This is what the Lord said in Acts 1:8, was it not? "Ye shall be witnesses unto me." We are to tell people about the Lord Jesus. Our message is a message about Him. Surely we can tell people what we know of Him! THIS IS WHAT THE SPIRIT EMPOWERS US TO DO--TO SPEAK OF CHRIST! How He loves to take the things of Christ, and make them known to us and to people everywhere!

Jesus Christ is the Saviour, and no one else!

Concl: Therefore, this is a very significant thing that we are doing tonight. We are observing the Supper which our Lord established to bring our thought back to Him, to prepare us to go out into this spiritually darkened world to tell the people of the world about the saving work of Christ.

We need to be learning more about that work. It needs to be before our hearts continually, so that, as we speak, we will be speaking from our hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit to the hearts of people who desperately need to know Him.

Let us pray for that boldness, that simplicity, that assurance that the Spirit of God gave to Peter to take the Word of God and speak to his fellow-Jews about the Lord Jesus Christ. May we go out this week, empowered anew by the Holy Spirit, to be His instruments in bringing the message of salvation to the needy sinners who are all around us. Remember: we do not use Him; He uses us!