

The Holy Spirit in the Modern Church

INTRODUCTION

- A. A little boy, whose mother was too sick to go to church, asked her little boy about the sermon he had just heard.
 - 1. "What did the preacher preach about?" she asked him, and he gave the surprising answer: "the preacher said God was going to send us an extra 'bed quilt.'"
 - 2. Surprised, the mother asked if he remembered the text and he replied, "The preacher said, 'He shall give you another comforter.'"
- B. Jesus did promise the disciples another Comforter.
 - 1. John 14 records that promise to the disciples:
 - a. "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" (Jn. 14:16-17).
 - b. "The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (Jn. 14:26).
 - 2. We know that those promises were made to the disciples, not all Christians.
 - a. Contrary to what some might teach, there is not a person alive today who has any miraculous power from the Spirit; he no longer operates in such a manner.
 - b. However, we dare not think that simply because the Spirit no longer operates in a miraculous way in the church that he is inactive or dead.
 - 1) The Holy Spirit is very much alive in the modern church.
 - 2) Tonight, we want to explore ways that the Spirit works in the church.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS INVOLVED IN BAPTISM

- A. The first Christian converts were promised "the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:28).
- B. At our baptism, the Holy Spirit plays an important role.
 - 1. "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit" (Jn. 3:5).
 - 2. "We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free — and we were all given the one Spirit to drink" (1 Cor. 12:13).
 - 3. "He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit" (Tit. 3:5).
- C. From what Paul says in 1 Corinthians, the Spirit's role in baptism seems to be, at least in part, a unifying role.
 - 1. Division ran deep in Corinth — "My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you" (1 Cor. 1:11).
 - 2. In order to deal with that division — and allegiance to different preachers based upon who baptized whom — Paul says, "It doesn't matter who baptized you. These quarrels don't matter. You were all baptized by the same Spirit."
 - a. We also should see our baptism by the one Spirit as a unifying force.
 - b. We are closely bound together as brothers and sisters because we have been baptized by the same Spirit into the same body — There is no room for division or for sowing discord, for we have been baptized by the same Spirit.

THE HOLY SPIRIT SANCTIFIES THE CHRISTIAN

- A. The Holy Spirit is involved in our sanctification.
 - 1. "You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus

- Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11).
2. "We ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth" (2 Thess. 2:13).
 3. The Christians to whom Peter wrote had "been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood" (1 Pet. 1:2).
- B. Sanctification refers to the act of being made holy — The Spirit is the Holy Spirit, and sanctifies the Christian; he makes the Christian holy.
1. Although the Spirit makes us holy, he cannot do so against our will; he's not going to make us holy people while we're screaming and fighting.
 2. We are not passive in our holiness.
 - a. "Just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy'" (1 Pet. 1:15-16).
 - b. Holiness is commanded, thus it cannot be a totally passive activity. We need to strive to live holy lives. Are you holy?

THE HOLY SPIRIT BRINGS ABOUT GROWTH

- A. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law" (Gal. 5:22-23).
- B. As the Holy Spirit dwells within us, he brings about spiritual fruit, growth.

THE HOLY SPIRIT PRODUCES LOVE

- A. The Holy Spirit is an instrument of Christian love.
1. "Hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us" (Rom. 5:5).
 2. "The fruit of the Spirit is love" (Gal. 5:22).
- B. God has poured out his love into our lives through the Spirit and the Spirit produces love in our lives. Thus, we learn to appreciate God's love through the Spirit who dwells within us, and he aids us as we love those around us.

THE HOLY SPIRIT PRODUCES JOY

- A. "You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe sufferings, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit" (1 Thess. 1:6).
- B. The Thessalonian Christians were able to have joy through the work of the Holy Spirit.
1. Joy is an important quality in a Christian's life.
 - a. "We also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation" (Rom. 5:11).
 - b. "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" (Phil. 4:4).
 2. Through the Holy Spirit's work in our lives, we can have that joy.

THE HOLY SPIRIT SERVES AS THE BASIS OF CHRISTIAN MORALITY

- A. In a context of sexual immorality, Paul writes, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body" (1 Cor. 6:19-20).
- B. Pagan temples were not primarily a place of worship, but temples were the dwelling places of the gods.
1. The idol — which the pagans considered to be a god — was housed in the temple.

- a. Notice how Paul deals with the idea negatively: "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands" (Acts 17:24).
- b. Paul says to the Athenians, "The gods you worship might dwell in manmade temples, but not my God."
2. Even though God does not dwell in man-made temples, God does have a temple in which he dwells, and that temple is our bodies.
 - a. The Holy Spirit dwells within us; our bodies are his temple.
 - b. Therefore, we cannot use our bodies anyway we see fit, but we need to live moral lives. This raises morality to a whole new level; we don't need to be moral just because there is a God and we are his children, but we also need to be moral because God's Spirit dwells within us.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AIDES OUR PRAYERS

- A. The Holy Spirit serves as an intercessor as we pray.
 1. "Pray in the Spirit on all occasions, with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints" (Eph. 6:18).
 2. "You, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit" (Jude 20).
 3. "Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father'" (Gal. 4:6).
 4. "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express" (Rom. 8:26).
- B. How does the Holy Spirit help us pray?
 1. He allows us to approach God's throne saying, "Abba, Father."
 - a. "Abba" is a term of great intimacy in Aramaic; it was the Aramaic word for "Daddy."
 - 1) I really do not think for one second that this text tells us to go before God and call him "Daddy." Such would be blasphemous. When we approach God's throne, we must do so with the utmost reverence and awe.
 - 2) What I do think this passage is teaching is that we are the adopted children of God; therefore, there is an intimacy we are able to have with God.
 - a) We are able to go before God as a child would go before a parent: knowing that we will be loved, knowing that we will be heard, and knowing that our Father will do what's best.
 - b) "Abba" is closely related to the idea of sonship: "You did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father'" (Rom. 8:15).
 - b. Only once do we have a record of Jesus praying using "Abba": "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will" (Mk. 14:36).
 - 1) Because this is the only record we have of Jesus' praying "Abba, Father," I really think that praying "Abba, Father" has a great deal to do with praying that God's will be done.
 - 2) Praying for God's will, not our own, to be done shows great trust and dependence; even a childlike trust and dependence, knowing that our Father will do what's best.
 2. The Spirit also intercedes for us when we don't know how we ought to pray.
 - a. There have been times in all of our lives that we were struggling so much that we really didn't know how we ought to pray.
 - b. The blessing we have as Christians is to know that the Spirit of God will take our imperfect prayers and offer them acceptably to God.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS INVOLVED IN PREACHING

- A. The Holy Spirit was greatly involved in the early preaching of Christian truth.
 - 1. "Our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction" (1 Thess. 1:5).
 - a. Of course, Paul was a man who had the miraculous gift of the Spirit, and the gospel went to the Thessalonians with the Holy Spirit in a radically different way than is possible today.
 - b. Calvinists would argue from passages such as this one that man is so deprived that the Holy Spirit must miraculously open his heart to receive the gospel.
 - 1) Calvinists like Jn. 16:8: "When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment."
 - 2) I would argue that the Holy Spirit convicts the world of guilt through (1) the inspiration of the apostles' preaching and (2) the inspiration of the Scriptures.
 - 2. The Holy Spirit was involved in the writing of Scripture.
 - a. 1 Pet. 1:20-21.
 - b. The Spirit was so involved in the inspiration of Scripture that Scripture is referred to as the sword of the Spirit: "Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17).
- B. The Holy Spirit's role in regard Scripture is finished — he guided the biblical writers to such an extent that what we have is the Word of God. As we study Scripture, we benefit from the work the Spirit did to give us the Word of God.

THE HOLY SPIRIT ESTABLISHES CHRISTIAN LEADERS

- A. Elders are placed in office by the Holy Spirit.
 - 1. To the Ephesian elders, Paul said, "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers" (Acts 20:28).
 - 2. In Acts 6, the apostles had the church decide whom they wanted to serve as deacons. I really think the members of a church should be involved in picking elders as well as deacons. But, churches do not install elders into office; the Holy Spirit does.
- B. We find similar language when we think of marriage.
 - 1. "What God has joined together, let man not separate" (Mt. 19:6).
 - 2. The preacher who stands before the couple really doesn't do a thing.
 - a. He might say, "I pronounce you husband and wife" from a legal standpoint, but it's God who joins together.
 - b. Likewise, the Holy Spirit is the one who sets elders over a congregation.

THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVES SPIRITUAL POWER

- A. The Holy Spirit dwells within us to help us as we live the Christian life.
 - 1. "I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being" (Eph. 3:16).
 - 2. "If you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live" (Rom. 8:13)- The Spirit enables us to put to death sinful behavior.
- B. We receive this power through the Spirit's indwelling.
 - 1. The Spirit dwells within the Christian.
 - a. "You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ" (Rom. 8:9).
 - b. "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?" (1 Cor. 6: 19).

2. Christians have long disagreed about how the Spirit dwells within us.
 - a. I'm sure that among us we would have different opinions about how the Spirit dwells within us.
 - b. Yet, we know this for certain: he dwells within us and he gives us spiritual power. Does the Holy Spirit dwell within you?