

PAUL'S THEOLOGY

Lesson 12

The Holy Spirit – Teachings of Christ

In 1980, I was studying theology in Nashville, Tennessee, while attending David Lipscomb College (now Lipscomb University). I went into my training uncertain about the Holy Spirit. A number of my friends were part of what I would call a “light charismatic movement.” It was not full-fledged Pentecostalism,¹ but it definitely had charismatic features. Other friends of mine were convinced that the Holy Spirit was simply a phrase that described the working of God, not really anything distinct even in the sense of the orthodox view of the Trinity.² Still other friends viewed the Holy Spirit as the scriptures rather than some indwelling being that worked beyond the pages of holy writ.

My own studies had led me to conclude that the Holy Spirit was indeed a being that indwelled the believer. But, I was unsure what that meant and what were the ramifications.

Some of my “light charismatic” friends were seeking, and thought they were exercising, biblical gifts of the Spirit as they sought speaking words of prophecy, speaking in unknown tongues, and more. Some of my non-charismatic friends would enter into strident theological discussions with them as they argued that the spiritual gifts we might term “miraculous” no longer existed. Usually, the scriptural argument against such gifts came from one of two directions.

One argument against the exercise of spiritual gifts used 1 Corinthians 13 as a proof text. In that chapter, Paul writes of speaking “in the tongues of men and angels,” of “prophetic powers,” of “understanding mysteries,” and of having a faith that could “remove mountains.” Paul then says that prophecies “will pass away” as will “tongues” and “knowledge.” These gifts, Paul wrote, would pass away “when the perfect comes” (1 Cor. 13:10). The argument my friends believed was that scripture itself was the “perfect” of which Paul, and once the Bible was complete, the spiritual gifts ceased. My friends reasoned that the need for such miraculous gifts was gone once scripture itself was available.

A second argument against the exercise of spiritual gifts was that it came only through apostolic laying on of hands. Acts 8 was typically referenced with the

¹ For a fuller understanding of Pentecostalism, see our lessons in church history that can be downloaded on the class website, www.Biblical-Literacy.com.

² For more on the Trinity, see the lessons in church history, or better yet, wait a few weeks. After the Holy Spirit classes, next up is our study of the Trinity.

account of Simon the Magician. Simon saw great signs and wonders being performed by Philip as Philip preached the gospel to the Samaritans. Even though the Samaritans were baptized believers in Christ, Luke records that the Holy Spirit “had not yet fallen on any of them” (Acts 8:16). So, the apostles from Jerusalem (remember Philip was not an apostle) came down to Samaria, laid hands on the baptized believers, and “they received the Holy Spirit” (Acts 8:17). The key verse that was used was Acts 8:18, “Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money.” The reasoning employed was that the evangelist Philip was not able to give the Spirit, even though he clearly had it and performed miracles in his ministry. It took the apostles to pass on the Spirit, and once the apostles passed away, the ability to pass on the Spirit died out.

As I listened to the debates rage, I was intrigued by the various positions. I had questions about the exercise of spiritual gifts, about the interpretations of scripture and about what was valid and what was not. I took a course entitled, “The Holy Spirit.” It did not answer my questions.

Those who know my personality will understand what I did next. I decided if I was going to understand what Paul wrote, I needed to first do two things. First, I needed a core understanding of what the Old Testament taught about the Holy Spirit. Of course, that was a strong source of material for Paul. He considered it “breathed out by God” and “profitable for teaching” (2 Tim. 3:16) (This is also where we started our study of Paul’s teachings on the Holy Spirit last week.) Second, I needed a core understanding of what Jesus taught about the Holy Spirit and what the experiences were of the early church. That is where we find our lessons for this week.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS

Why do we consider the teachings of Jesus as part of what Paul had as his own foundation for understanding God? Paul was not a disciple of Jesus while Jesus was on earth. Paul would not have sat at the feet of the earthly Jesus and heard his teaching. Yet, Paul did build his understanding of God and his work in Christ on the words and actions of Christ as Paul learned them. We know Paul interacted on a significant level with Peter and the other apostles.³ We also know that Paul spent significant time with Luke, the historian who accumulated the first hand accounts that we have in the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts.⁴ We confidently read the words and teachings of Jesus and the account of the early

³ See Acts 15, Gal. 2, and 2 Pet. 3:15.

⁴ See the notes on the Life of Paul in the lessons at www.Biblical-Literacy.com.

church knowing they would have been front and center of Paul's beliefs and teachings. As F. F. Bruce wrote:

These [Old Testament] strands of expectation are brought together in the New Testament with the beginning of Jesus' public ministry...The picture given in Acts of the presence and activity of the Spirit is probably true to the general experience of the primitive church...***This picture is assumed throughout the Pauline letters, but further and distinctive emphases are added*** (Emphasis added).⁵

Next week, our intention is to begin studying the "further and distinctive emphases" of Paul, while this week, we focus on the words and teachings of Jesus along with the experiences of the early, early church (recognizing that the term "early church" for many scholars includes the church even beyond the death of Paul. We are dealing here with the church in its earliest stage).

As we focus on the teachings of Jesus about the Holy Spirit, we delve carefully into John chapters 13-16. These are the words that scholars have labeled Jesus' "Farewell Discourse." As Jesus prepared for his betrayal and crucifixion, he had one last time to speak to his apostles. John records this interaction beginning with chapter 13. In a real sense, these are the Savior's last words of teaching delivered to all his apostles. No doubt, they conveyed the most important words he could deliver at that time.

During his final teaching, Jesus made 5 statements about the Holy Spirit. We should focus on each of the five:

1. **John 14:15-20**: "If you love me, you will obey what I command. And 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... On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you."

Here, Jesus prophesies that the Holy Spirit, called here the "Counselor" and the "Spirit of Truth," will come from the Father to the apostles. But the Spirit goes beyond simply the apostles, it seems to come to believers because Jesus clarifies that the Spirit will **not** be coming to the world that "cannot accept him."

As we briefly discussed last week, Jesus points out that the Spirit **will** (future tense) be "**in**" the disciples. That is distinguished from the moment Jesus was speaking when the Spirit was "**with**" the disciples. This is a recognition by Jesus that the Spirit selected whom it indwelt prior to Pentecost. The Spirit was **with**

⁵ F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Eerdmans 1977) at 207-208.

the disciples because Jesus was with the disciples and the Holy Spirit was in Jesus. As Jesus had already explained in Luke 4:18:

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.

Jesus then adds that on the day the Spirit resides within the disciples, as opposed to the current day when the Spirit was upon Jesus and simply with the disciples, the disciples would have a new understanding. They would “realize that I [Jesus] am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.”

As strange as it sounds to Christians today, the apostles at that time did not yet understand the relationship of Jesus to God the Father, nor did they understand the relationship of the believers and Jesus. This understanding, Jesus promised, would come on the day the Holy Spirit began indwelling the disciples.

So from this first teaching, we discover two truths about the Holy Spirit:

- **The Holy Spirit will indwell the disciple.⁶**
- **With the indwelling Holy Spirit will come understanding about the relationship between Jesus, God, and Christians.**

We turn now to the second passage where Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit.

2. **John 14:25-26:** "All this I have spoken while still with you. But 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."

Jesus promised that when the Counselor (whom he also calls the “Holy Spirit”) comes, he will come in the name of Christ, and he will teach and remind the apostles of Jesus’ teaching. This must have come as some assurance to the apostles. Without some divine help remembering, I would have tried to invent a tape recorder for fear of losing track of something important Jesus said or did. I can imagine that I would have been there, pen in hand, saying, “Could you please talk a bit slower Jesus?” Or, “Did you say ‘celebrate’ or ‘celibate’?” Yet, Jesus assured his apostles that their memories would have divine aid.

⁶ We have Jesus making this promise to the apostles. Some scholars question whether the promise as made applies to all disciples, or simply the apostles. Because the apostles are frequently termed “disciples” we have avoided addressing this issue head on in this lesson. We do believe that the lesson as follows bears witness to the fact that all disciples rather than simply the twelve enjoyed the promise of Jesus.

This is an often-overlooked passage in what it says about the gospel accounts. The accounts have inspiration of the Spirit in that, among other things, the Spirit was teaching and reminding the apostles of what they wrote.

We must be careful not to take our 21st century English mindset about the word “all” into this passage. In Greek, ”all” (*panta* – *παντα* is the form used here) does not mean every single solitary thing. Jesus is not here saying that the Spirit would teach quantum physics as part of the “all things.” What Jesus meant was that the Spirit would teach all things the Spirit should teach, all that was needed.⁷

So from this second lesson in Jesus’ last teaching we find the point that:

- **The Holy Spirit will teach and remind of the words and teachings of Jesus.**

We consider now the third passage:

3. **John 15:26-27** – “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.”

Here Jesus calls the Spirit the “Helper,” the “Spirit of Truth.” We are told that the Spirit proceeds from the Father. We are also told that the Spirit will bear witness about Jesus. Not about the Spirit, not about the believer, but the Spirit will bear witness about Jesus. The Spirit will not bear this witness alone, acting solo. The Spirit will do it in conjunction with the disciples. In summary we understand from this:

- **The Holy Spirit will bear witness with the disciples about Jesus.**

The fourth time Jesus mentions the Spirit is found in John 16.

4. **John 16:7-11**: “Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.”

⁷ We see this same sense of the word “all” in Mark 1:5, “And *all* the country of Judea and *all* Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.” Clearly, Mark is not suggesting that everyone, down to the Romans guard and the Jewish High Priest went to John the Baptist for baptizing. Mark means “everyone within a group.”

Jesus gives more clues about the Spirit, whom he again calls the “helper” in this passage, saying that the helper will not come unless Jesus goes away. This makes sense to us today, although it likely did not to the apostles at the time. We can fairly say, “How can the Spirit bear witness to Jesus (as Jesus just said in the previous passage) unless Jesus in fact goes to the cross, succumbs to the grave, and returns in triumphant resurrection?” Jesus gives a bit of this idea in adding that the Spirit will convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. This conviction is centered on Christ and the world’s disbelief, the resurrection, and what those things say about Satan and the fallen world. From this perspective, we see the work of the Spirit as:

- **The Holy Spirit will convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment.**

The final passage where Jesus speaks of the coming Spirit is in John 16:12-15. Here Jesus says,

5. **John 16:12-15:** “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore, I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

Jesus again calls the Holy Spirit the “Spirit of Truth.” Jesus specifies that the Spirit will not be freelancing nor speaking on his own. Rather, the Spirit will speak what he hears from God as he *guides* the disciples into truth. The Spirit is not decreeing truth to the disciples truth, rather the Spirit will work as a guide. Consider the difference as we read Acts 15. The apostles and church leaders gathered together to debate the merits and flesh through the considerations on the Gentile issues. After much debate, a conclusion was reached. The church then wrote a letter to the Gentiles stating, it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us...” (Acts 15:28). The Holy Spirit, they knew, had guided them into truth!

We are remiss if we fail to see the import to verse 12, “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.” Jesus did not say everything that his disciples (and mankind) would ultimately need. This was not because Jesus forgot or was short on knowledge. It is because the disciples could not handle it yet. They could not “bear them.” But that was okay! Jesus was sending the Spirit who would guide them “into all the truth.”

As the Spirit does so, the Spirit will be bringing the glory to Jesus, taking the treasures we find through Jesus and making them known to the disciples. Again here, the Spirit is not sent with the mission of glorifying the Spirit, the experience,

or the disciple. The Spirit's mission and work is to bring glory to Jesus. This leaves us with the teaching:

- **The Holy Spirit will guide in truth.**
- **The Holy Spirit will bring glory to Jesus declaring the things of Jesus.**

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE EARLY CHURCH

As we turn from the words of Jesus to the book of Acts, we can find something unusually clear: the Holy Spirit performed exactly as Jesus taught. We can turn each page and read through each chapter and verse of Acts, and we will find the actions of the Spirit fit the teachings of Christ like a hand in a glove. We will leave that to your personal study, but we select a few of the passages as an example.

Consider Acts 1, where the Holy Spirit is mentioned four times:

In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up, after **he had given commands through the *Holy Spirit* to the apostles** whom he had chosen. He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but **you will be baptized with the *Holy Spirit*** not many days from now."

So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But **you will receive power when the *Holy Spirit* has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses** in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." ...

In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons

was in all about 120) and said, "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the *Holy Spirit* spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.

We see here the Holy Spirit was the source of the commands Jesus gave the apostles before his ascension. This is in line with Jesus' teaching that the Spirit was with them in Jesus, even before the Spirit was in them as believers.

Next, we see Jesus again assuring the disciples that the Holy Spirit would inundate them in the coming days. They will be immersed ("baptized") in the Spirit, as Jesus promised in John 14:15-20.

The third reference speaks of the power the disciples will receive when the Holy Spirit comes upon them. This was power to be the witnesses to Christ throughout the world. Jesus had spoken of this very thing in John 15:26-27 when he said that the Spirit would "bear witness" about Jesus along with the disciples.

The fourth and final reference to the Spirit in Acts 1 comes when Peter quotes the Spirit as the source for King David's prophecies about Judas and Christ. Interestingly, the Holy Spirit was functioning in the Old Testament in the ways in which Jesus said he would function. The Spirit was testifying about Jesus!

We should not finish our cursory consideration of Acts without noticing Acts chapter 2:

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the *Holy Spirit* and began to speak in other tongues as the *Spirit* gave them utterance.

The promise of Jesus came true. The Spirit descended from the Father upon the disciples. Interestingly, the disciples began to "speak in other tongues" as the "Spirit gave them utterance." Now, one might ask, "Where did Jesus teach the Spirit would give utterance to other tongues?"

In answer, we might first consider what it was the disciples were saying. It was not some ecstatic utterance that could not be understood. In fact, the tongues were foreign languages of the people that were quite easily understood! The crowd was amazed that unlearned Galileans were speaking foreign tongues:

They were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not

all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?"

So we see, not an ecstatic utterance in Acts 2, but a set of languages the people could all understand. Yet, the people were under the impression that the disciples had been dipping into a bit too much early morning alcohol. They stated, "They are filled with new wine" as they contemplated what the disciples were saying. Here, we might make a suggestion; this gives us a clue to what the disciples were saying. The imbibing of wine would not allow them to speak in another unlearned tongue. It would, however, explain why they might be speaking about seeing the Lord Jesus alive and resurrected after three days in the grave!

The message the disciples delivered by the power of the Holy Spirit in various tongues was the message of Jesus. Again, this is exactly what Jesus said the Holy Spirit would do. Peter explained as much to the people stating:

these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day [9 am]. But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: "And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy."

Peter had the Spirit, and for the first time, Peter really understood! The Spirit had taught and confirmed for Peter that Jesus was in the Father and in Peter. The Spirit made known to Peter what was Jesus.' Peter, through the Spirit, bore witness to Christ and 3,000 were baptized and added to the church that day!

We could continue through Acts, and we would always see the same thing: the Spirit works just as Christ taught. As the Spirit worked, the emphasis was always on Christ, never properly on the Spirit. The issue is never, "*how* did the Spirit do it?" The point is always *what* the Spirit is doing.

With that background, we turn to Paul.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN PAUL

We can read through Paul and see the consistency of the Holy Spirit we would expect. Just as in Acts, Paul writes of the Holy Spirit in ways that readily recall and reflect the teachings of Jesus.

Let us look at an example for each of our bullet points earlier:

- **The Holy Spirit will indwell the disciple.**

Paul clearly understood this point. Paul writes of the Holy Spirit “given us” (Rom. 5:5), the Spirit who “dwells in you” (Rom. 8:9, 11; 1 Cor. 3:16). God has “given us his Spirit in our hearts” (2 Cor. 1:22). We are “sealed with the promised Holy Spirit” (Eph. 1:3).

- **With the indwelling Holy Spirit will come understanding about the relationship between Jesus, God, and Christians.**

It is, Paul understood, the Spirit “by whom we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’” (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). From the Spirit, we understand that God is our Father even as we understand that we are in Christ. These are things that are spiritual truths that could never be understood any other way. Paul writes, “these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God” (1 Cor. 2:10).

- **The Holy Spirit will teach and remind of the words and teachings of Jesus.**

This is true for Paul in that the Spirit brings the holiness of Christ and his teaching to fruition in the believer. So, Paul tells the Corinthians, “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).

- **The Holy Spirit will bear witness with the disciples about Jesus.**

Paul writes that, “The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom. 8:16). The Spirit is who “revealed to his holy apostles and prophets” what had not been “known to sons of men in other generations” (Eph. 3:5).

- **The Holy Spirit will convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment.**

This is fully in line with Paul’s teaching that it is “by the power of the Holy Spirit” that we may “abound in hope” (Rom. 15:13). The gospel of Christ’s death and resurrection came to the Thessalonians “in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction” (1 Thess. 1:5). It is the “washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit” Paul writes of to Titus (Tit. 3:5).

- **The Holy Spirit will guide in truth.**

No one, Paul wrote, could affirm in their life and voice that “‘Jesus is Lord’ except in the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:3). This same Spirit is what is gradually changing the believer into the image of the Lord (2 Cor. 3:18).

- **The Holy Spirit will bring glory to Jesus declaring the things of Jesus.**

Paul taught this direct point to the Corinthians, “Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God” (1 Cor. 2:12).

In Paul, we see an express understanding of the Spirit that aligns with the teachings of Christ and the experience of the early church. Next week, we take the next step of discovering how Paul elucidates more on the Spirit.

POINTS FOR HOME

1. *“Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.”* (Rom. 8:9).

Do you know Christ? Is his Spirit in you as a guarantee? If not, let us ask God for a conviction about our sin, his righteousness and the judgment we escape by the blood of Christ. As we do so, we should remember Paul’s admonition, “The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14).

2. *“The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God”* (Rom. 8:16)

So many of the points Jesus made about the Holy Spirit combine and overlap each other. It is from the Spirit that we understand the relationship of Jesus and God, and the relationship we might share as well. Let us each pray to God that we might have this understanding

3. *“God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”* (Rom. 5:5).

Paul spoke of the need for those born of the Spirit to walk by the Spirit. The Christian has the Holy Spirit poured into her or his heart. This Spirit is not there as a potted plant! He is there to teach, remind, encourage, uplift, testify, encourage, transform, renew, exhort, *etc.*, the believer. May we prayerfully decide to live by the Spirit and watch God use us to change the world!