

Friday, May 22, 2026

The Holy Spirit as Counselor

Acts 13:2

As you enter your time with God today, take a moment to quiet your mind. Breathe this prayer: "Come, Lord Jesus, come. Fill me with your Spirit. Open my heart that you might share your words of life with me."

We read today from Acts 13:2. Read the passage now or at the end of this devotion. What does this passage teach us about the Holy Spirit as our Counselor?

I have always wondered about the idea of "A Sign from God".

You know what I'm talking about. We are looking for tangible evidence that God is speaking to us. I have had some folks talk to me about butterflies that have shown up serendipitously that showed them the presence of a departed loved one. I've heard stories of 'wrong turns' that brought people face to face with a life-transforming and defining moment that they hold as evidence of God's sign. An interaction with a stranger is quickly rephrased as an angel in disguise when it brings a word of comfort, guidance or encouragement.

Because of my engrained cynicism, I can be a pessimist of such stories. It does not help that I can point to "signs from God" that subsequently turned into something quite different than first understood. I do believe we should be cautious in attributing any event, circumstance, or interaction as "the divine intervention of God" into our world.

But today's passage confronts such cynicism and reminds me and us that God has regularly 'spoken' into the presence of his people in supernatural ways. Today's verse tells us how it changed the life of two men.

"While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.""

As we complete our week of considering the work of the Holy Spirit as Counselor, we are confronted with how the 'counsel' of God alters our lives for the glory of God. Consider Paul and Barnabas.

Barnabas is always a positive figure in the Bible. He had invested in the ministry of the church through selling a parcel of land and giving the money to the church. He had advocated for Paul's admittance into the church when others were skeptical. He was spoken of as a man of faith and his nickname is "the Son of Encouragement".

Saul will become Paul, the theologian letter writing missionary of the church. But at this point, he's a new leader, not yet proven in his capacity to build the church. He carries the stigma of his former life when he persecuted Christians and sought them out for torture and imprisonment. He is clearly an unknown quantity.

Into these two stories, the Spirit speaks. The group is primed to hear God's voice because they are praising God and submitting to him in dependence through their fast.

Two things can be noted. One, it is not clarified what the Spirit did to speak the word to the group, and two, we get no sense that the Holy Spirit speaking was unsettling to the group. Obviously, these believers had discernment to “hear” the Spirit either audibly, through worship, or through a word shared by one of the members. They were also mature enough to not be paralyzed by the supernatural intervention of God. These were people who already seen God’s power.

So, the Spirit speaks and two men have their lives radically altered. Correction. The Spirit speaks and the lives of thousands are radically altered as the gospel is carried to distant parts of the world. Correction to my correction. The Spirit speaks and the whole world has changed.

We live in the legacy of the ministry of Paul and Barnabas. Because the Holy Spirit counseled the early church to equip and empower these men to the mission, we have heard the story of the saving grace of Christ. That story, somehow, through the family tree of faith, can be traced back to what happened after the Spirit spoke.

We know Jesus because the Spirit spoke. The world hears the gospel because as Counselor, the Holy Spirit continues to faithfully bring the word of transformation from the Triune God to a world that desperately needs the hope that comes from the grace of Christ.

Give God praise for the faithful work of the Holy Spirit as Counselor. Pray that the Spirit might lead and use you to be a part of his work of bringing the gospel to the world.

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord turn his smile towards you and give you his peace.

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

I love you all. Blessings.

Feel free to share this devotion with others.

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