

Upper Room Discourse - The Holy Spirit's ministry to Believers - part 3
a study for the College and Career Class at Gulf Coast Baptist Church
by Steve Thomas 5/14/23

Introduction

During his last few moments of time with the disciples, Jesus planted seeds which the writers of the New Testament harvested over the next 30-40 years. Believers have been reaping from these same statements for over two thousand years. Jesus told them that the Holy Spirit would be sent after He was gone. The Holy Spirit would be a Comforter, a Teacher, and a Guide to bring things to remembrance and to lead them to all truth. If a believer is feeling anxious, confused, or lost then it makes sense that their relationship or connection with the Spirit is not what it should be.

Most professing Christians have one of two connections with the Holy Spirit. The first group would be those that believe that the sign gifts are still operable and will give Him credit for "spiritual" happenings like healings, tongues, and words of prophecy. These gifts are no longer operable (1 Cor 13:8-12), so the happenings are not being empowered by the Holy Spirit. If they happen at all, they are empowered by the Flesh or by another spirit. The second group of believers would be those that believe that the Holy Spirit makes them feel guilty, ashamed, or drives them to repentance with conviction. As we have seen from the New Testament, these feelings are more likely caused by one's conscience than the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit convinces the unbelievers of their lack of belief (among other things) and leads them to Christ. When a person believes the facts of the gospel, the Holy Spirit baptizes them into the Body of Christ. The Godhead takes up residence in the believer and the Spirit begins the work of sanctification. This work is done through guidance, teaching, and comforting. He illuminates the believer, shedding light on the deep things of God, and reminding the believer what God has told him. He brings comfort to the believer with the truth about God. When the believer walks with him, the Spirit will lead the believer, and produce fruit in him, conforming him to Christ's image.

There are three more things that the Holy Spirit will do for the believer that are connected to the ministries that we have already discussed. The first is the Sealing work that is done at salvation and continues throughout the Christian life. The second is the work of regeneration and cleansing that happens during the believer's time here on earth. And the third is the work of communication to the Father on behalf of the believer that the Spirit will do when the believer struggles to speak to God.

Sealed unto the day of redemption...

According to the first letter to the Corinthians, the Holy Spirit is the "earnest" or down payment on all future installment payments from the promises of God (1 Cor 1:20-22). A seal is a token assuring the possession of property to one. Paul says that the Holy Spirit "stablisheth us" or confirms us, makes us stable. Being placed in Christ by the Spirit provides the believer stability through these often chaotic times. Through the NT scriptures God tells the believer to focus on what is to come in order to get through the present times of affliction. Christ pointed the disciples to his second coming "let not your heart be troubled... I go to prepare... I will come

again”. The writer of Hebrews tells the believer in chapter 12 to “Look unto Jesus..lest ye be wearied or faint in your minds”. Paul in Ephesians tells the believer to put on the “helmet of salvation” to ward off attacks of the Evil One. The Holy Spirit is the seal, or that which gives undoubted validity to the contract within a document (Eph 1:13). The contract is between the believer and the Father (John 6:27). The Son is the stand in for the believer because of His righteous life and atoning death. The Son offers the believer life (1 John 5:11-13). The Holy Spirit was the seal at the moment of salvation (Eph 4:30).

The seal here is not like tupperware, or the black rubber pitch used on a roof or a boat to keep things in and other things out. This seal is like the image made in melted wax which was placed on a document containing a contract, showing validity of both parties. The Spirit’s presence and activity within the believer is a token that God has kept His promises and will keep all future promises to the believer (1 Cor 1:20).

Washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost

Paul uses a word to describe what the Spirit does for the believer. The believer experiences a “renewedness” in his Spirit. This is descriptive of the new life that is put in the believer at the moment of salvation. The Holy Spirit is making the believer look like Christ (Rom 12:2, Titus 3:5-6). The alternative is a believer taking over this process on his own and outwardly fashioning his appearance to please God or other believers. The renewedness is placed in the believer, and he must learn to appropriate the character of Christ, produced by the Spirit, when the believer is yielded to the work of the Spirit like we discussed last lesson (Gal 5:16-6:4). Paul’s desire was to be like Christ in his death (Eph 3:10). This happens when the believer gains an experiential knowledge of Christ. The Spirit can provide this through his work of illumination and teaching that was previously discussed.

The believer must get out of the way, so that the Spirit can do the work of renovation in the believer. The Spirit is not reforming what is currently in the believer, but the believer is dying to his flesh, and the Spirit is replacing what has been cast off (“put off the old man and his deeds”- Eph 4:22, Col 3:9) with the Fruit of the Spirit. The mature believer learns to direct fruit which the Spirit produces towards the situation as needed.

The believer is being cleansed and renovated, starting the process that will end with him being completely like Christ when he sees him (1 John 3:2).

Groanings which cannot be uttered

The believer in the Dispensation of Grace has been given access to God in ways that believers in other times never enjoyed. But the veil still exists between God and the believer, causing him to walk by faith and not by sight. Romans chapter 8 discusses this time where the whole creation is groaning, awaiting the glorification to come. Suffering is the characterization of this present time (Rom 8:18). Understanding that the believer will struggle at times with his worship, the Holy Spirit will intercede for the believer with a “sigh” that cannot be spoken (8:26). This communicates to the Father what is necessary during this time of struggle. God

knows what is in the mind of the Spirit because of the work that the Spirit does on the behalf of the saint.

Conclusion

To be able to receive the ministry of the Spirit in this time is an incredible gift for the believer. God's graciousness towards His children is evident in the way that He comforts, teaches, and through regeneration conforms the believer to the image of Christ. Being aware of the ministries of the Holy Spirit will allow the believer to yield to the work being done. When the believer tries to do this work on his own, the Holy Spirit will not abide or be comfortable in the believer. When He is grieved, the work of sanctification stops, and the believer is left to his flesh. Through a change of mind, the believer can become spiritual again, allowing the Holy Spirit to continue His work in the believer. Sometimes this work is between the members of the Godhead, communicating with each other when the believer fails to worship adequately. When the believer is aware of the work of the Spirit, and the way the Spirit will battle his flesh, the believer is more incentivized to get out of the way and let the Spirit do the work that Jesus predicted He would do.