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# The Holy Spirit—Our Helper

Bethany Bible Church, Adult Sunday School Class, March 25, 2012

## The Spirit--Our Power to Witness

There's much more we could say about the Holy Spirit. But we close our study of His ministry--and specifically the help that He gives the individual believer--by considering the ways that He helps the believer to bear witness for the Lord Jesus Christ in this world.

The help that the Spirit provides to us in this area is--if we may put it this way--very important to *Him*. It is an expression of the ministry that the Lord Jesus said the Spirit Himself would be sent to have on this earth. Jesus told His disciples, "He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you" (John 16:14-15)<sup>1</sup>. Just as the Spirit's ministers on earth by--as it were--shining the spotlight on the Lord Jesus Christ, He wonderfully helps His people to do the same.

### I. HE PREPARES THE HEARTS OF THOSE WHO WILL HEAR OUR WITNESS FOR JESUS CHRIST.

- A. The Lord Jesus was leaving His disciples on this earth to bear a witness for Him. But how would it be that such a seemingly insignificant group would be able to convince a sin-hardened world that the Savior has come, and that God offers eternal life in Him? Thankfully, it would not be the work of those disciples--nor of us to follow after them--to do so. It would be the work of the Holy Spirit Himself. Jesus told them that it was to their advantage that He left them; "for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged" (John 16:7b-11). It is the task of the followers of Jesus to proclaim the Savior to this world; but it's the task of the Holy Spirit to prepare in the people of this world a sense of their need to be saved! Frankly, we do a terrible job of convicting sinners. But the Holy Spirit does it perfectly, lovingly, and unto the complete fulfillment of God's appointed result.
- B. R.A. Torrey--who was a great evangelist--once wrote; "We need not despair of any one, no matter how indifferent they may appear, no matter how worldly, no matter how self-satisfied, no matter how irreligious, the Holy Spirit can convince men of sin. A young minister of very rare culture and ability once came to me and said, 'I have a great problem on my hands. I am the pastor of the church in a university town. My congregation is largely made up of university professors and students. They are most delightful people. They have very high moral ideals and are living most exemplary lives.' 'Now,' he continued, 'if I had a congregation in which there were drunkards and outcasts and thieves, I could convince them of sin, but my problem is how to make people like that, the most delightful people in the world, believe that they are sinners, how to convict them of sin.' I replied, 'It is impossible. You cannot do it, but the Holy Spirit can.' And so He can. Some of the deepest manifestations of conviction of sin I have ever seen have been on the part of men and women of most exemplary conduct and attractive personality. But they were sinners and the Holy Spirit opened their eyes to the fact."<sup>2</sup> As Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:10, "For we are His

workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Just think of how helpless we would be in the good work of bearing a witness for Christ in this world if it weren’t for the gracious ministry of the Holy Spirit to prepare the way for us in advance!

## II. HE EMPOWERS US TO BEAR THAT WITNESS IN THIS WORLD.

- A. The hardness of the hearts of sinners isn’t our only problem. We’re also hindered by our *own* inability to bear an effective witness for Christ. But the Holy Spirit helps us here as well. He is, in fact, the essential power of our witness for Christ! A key passage for this is found in the one that gives us the promise of our Lord to His disciples after He was raised from the dead, and just before He ascended to the Father. He told them the message of the gospel they would be preaching in Luke 24:46-48, when He said, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things.” But they were not to simply run out and declare Him to the world right then and there. He next told them, “Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high” (v. 49). We’re told in Acts 1:8 what the nature of this “power” was when He said to them, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” In other words, they would be effective as His witnesses only *after* the Spirit had come to them.
- B. The proof of the greatness of this aspect of the Spirit’s enabling power is shown in at least two ways.
1. It’s shown in the remarkable difference that occurred in the boldness of the disciples after the Spirit came at Pentecost. Before then, they were fearful and timid in their identification with Christ. Peter himself--who had once boasted that he would die for Jesus--denied that he even knew Him. But after the Spirit came in Acts 2, they began to testify boldly and joyfully of Him. And Peter himself--the one who formerly denied the Lord--became the boldest preacher of them all. Three thousand people--including many of those who had formerly crucified the Lord--became followers of Him after Peter’s preaching in the power of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 2:41).
  2. It’s shown in the way that the Lord’s promise was kept--and that His followers did indeed become His witnesses first in Jerusalem (Acts 2), then in Judea and Samaria (Acts 8), then to the end of the earth. We, by the way--dwelling in Portland, Oregon--are a living proof of the greatness of the Spirit’s ministry of enabling His people to bear witness of Jesus Christ; because it would be hard to find a spot on the globe more remote from Jerusalem--the very place where the Lord Jesus first made that promise--than where we sit this morning!

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<sup>1</sup>All Scripture readings are taken from *the Holy Bible, New King James Version*; copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

<sup>2</sup>R.A. Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973), pp. 86-87.