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The Holy Spirit—Our Helper

Bethany Bible Church, Adult Sunday School Class, July 17, 2011

The Holy Spirit's Work in Our Lord

The Holy Spirit's work in the earthly ministry of our Lord Jesus ought to be of great personal interest to us; because the same Spirit now lives in us to unite us forever to Jesus' incarnation, righteous life, atoning death, resurrection and glory!

In our last two sessions, we considered the things that the Lord Jesus specifically taught concerning the ministry of the Holy Spirit on earth toward us. Today, we consider how the Holy Spirit ministered in the life of our Lord as He Himself walked upon earth.

We can see the Spirit's work in Jesus with respect to . . .

I. HIS CONCEPTION.

A. Our Lord eternally existed as the Son of the Father. But it was the Holy Spirit who was the divine Agent of our Lord's conception in the womb of the virgin Mary; and thus, of His incarnation. As the angel told Joseph, "that which is conceived [or "begotten"] in her is of the Holy Spirit"¹ (Matthew 1:20). As the same angel had told Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). It was the Father who "prepared" for Him a body (Hebrews 10:5); but it was through the Holy Spirit that that body was conceived in Mary's womb.

B. This truth is vital to our salvation. As Dr. Charles Ryrie wrote, "[N]othing was missing from [Jesus'] humanity that is essential to perfect humanity and nothing was added that was nonhuman."² And yet, this was done without the agency of a man; and therefore did not include the curse of Adam's sin. As the Son of God, He was at the same time fully human, and composed of all the constituent parts of full humanity (see 1 Thessalonians 5:23)--that is, a body (Hebrews 2:14), a soul (Matthew 26:38), and a spirit (Mark 2:8). And this means that, because of the work of the Holy Spirit in His conception, He was both fully human *and* fully sinless; and thus fully qualified to be the atoning Substitute (2 Corinthians 5:21), and the compassionate High Priest (Hebrews 4:15) of every member of the human family that trusts in Him.

II. HIS MINISTRY.

A. One way that the Spirit's work toward our Lord's ministry is described is as an "anointing". This would remind us of the way that, under the old covenant, the priests and the articles of the tabernacle were "anointed" with sacred oil for ministry; and thus 'consecrated' for God's specific use (Exodus 40:9-16; Leviticus 8:30). The Scriptures promised that the Messiah's ministry would be affirmed by 'anointing' (Daniel 9:24; Hebrews 1:9; see also Acts 4:27); and it was specifically with the Holy Spirit that it was said the Messiah would be anointed for the preaching of good tidings (Isaiah 61:1-2; see also Luke 4:16-21). Jesus was "anointed" by the Spirit as the Messiah. (Note that the noun "Christ" means "Anointed One".) This 'anointing' by the Spirit most likely occurred at Jesus' baptism when the Holy Spirit descended upon Him (Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:32-34), since His baptism was the event that marked the beginning of His public ministry. (This would proba-

bly be what Jesus meant when He said that the Father had “set His seal” on Him; see John 6:27). It was with the Holy Spirit that He was “anointed” for the ministry of healing and doing good (Acts 10:38; see also Matthew 12:28). Our Lord’s ministry toward fallen humanity was, thus, clearly marked out as “approved” by God.

- B. The Spirit’s work toward our Lord’s ministry is also described as a “filling” (that is, an empowering and leading in a prevailing and pervasive way). This aspect of the Spirit’s work in our Lord is what is prophetically spoken of in Isaiah 11:2 and 42:1. In Luke 4:1-2, after His baptism, we’re told that--“being filled with the Holy Spirit”--He was “led by the Spirit into the wilderness” to be tempted by the devil. We’re told that the Spirit’s leading in His earthly ministry was such that Jesus always “taught” and “did” according to the Father’s pleasure (John 8:28-29); and that He was characterized by a rejoicing in the Spirit (Luke 10:21). (It’s good to remember that if no less than the Son of God Himself walked on earth in dependency upon the Holy Spirit in His life and ministry, we can do no less in ours!)

III. HIS DEATH.

- A. If the Holy Spirit led the Son of God in His life and strengthen Him in His ministry, it’s reasonable to believe that He also led and strengthened Him in His great atoning work of dying on the cross for us. In Hebrews 9:14, we’re told that it was “through the eternal Spirit” that Jesus “offered Himself without spot to God”.
- B. The sacrifice of Jesus was not an act that He performed on His own initiative; but was something done in perfect submission to the eternal agreement of all members of the triune Godhead. Thus, His death for our sins truly is a sacrifice that is completely acceptable to the Father.

IV. HIS RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION.

- A. In Ephesians 1:19-23, we’re told of the exceedingly great power of God that is at work in us (see also 3:7, 20); and we’re told that it is the same power which raised our Lord from the dead and seated Him at the right hand of His Father in glory. That this “exceedingly great power” is the Holy Spirit is made clear from 3:16; where Paul prays that God would grant that his fellow Christians be “strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man”. Thus, the Holy Spirit was the divine Agent by which God the Father raised His Son from the dead and seated Him in heavenly glory. He was “put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit” (1 Peter 3:18). The Holy Spirit is “the Spirit of holiness” by which Jesus was “declared to be the Son of God with power . . . by the resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:4).
- B. This same Holy Spirit that raised the Son of God from the dead is also in us, to secure us and guarantee to us our own future resurrection with Christ. As Paul wrote, “But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you” (Romans 8:11; see also 6:4-5).

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

²Charles C. Ryrie, *The Holy Spirit* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1997), p. 60.