

THE PASTOR AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

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Luke 24:48, 49 is a sobering passage for all who would engage in the work of the Lord.

You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.

We know that this was written in anticipation of Pentecost but the implications go far beyond. Jesus is saying that no ministry should be attempted without the accompanying presence of the Spirit. The word "clothed" gives the idea of "covered" or "engulfed" by the Spirit. The disciples needed to be convinced that no sermon could be preached, no plans made, no church started with a dependence upon their own ingenuity.

Those anticipating a life of service for Christ need to learn the same lesson. You who have had seminary are especially vulnerable to the suggestion that since you are equipped with Greek and Hebrew, a knowledge of the Bible, theology, church history, and homiletics you are prepared to make an impact on the world. Until you are absolutely convinced of Christ's words which indicate that you are helpless unless "clothed with power from on high" you are not adequately prepared in spite of an M.Div.

A "candid camera" television program portrayed a scene in which a motor had been removed from a car. The car was towed to the top of a hill and allowed to coast down the hill and into a service station

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with a lady from the program steering it. When the attendant checked the oil you can imagine his amazement at making the "missing motor" discovery. With disbelief and frustration he exclaimed, "Lady, you have no motor!" It is just as foolish for the disciples or us to think of ministering without God's power as to drive a car without a motor. The Lord was trying to convince the disciples of their helplessness apart from the Holy Spirit.

Why is the Holy Spirit essential to an effective ministry? In the first three chapters of I Corinthians, three miracle works are mentioned, none of which can be accomplished except by the Spirit of God.

I. The work of establishing men of faith.

And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God (I Corinthians 2:4, 5).

Men who have a solid foundation for faith do not arrive at that point by clever arguments or the winsome personality of the preacher but by the application of the truths of God by the Spirit of God.

What are these truths that make dependence on the Spirit essential? (1) Man must be convinced that the revelation of God is more valid than the wisdom of men. "The world through its wisdom did not come to know God" (I Cor. 1:21). But they never seem to get discouraged in their effort! Unless the Spirit of God convinces men of the message of the cross it still is "to Gentiles foolishness." (2) Man must realize that the greatest sign of God's power was the cross. The Jew thought it was a sign of weakness and looked for further outward confirming evidence (1:22). But each time the message is preached and men are transformed thereby, it confirms the fact that the Holy Spirit is at work applying the message. We cannot do that in our strength. Canon Evans speaking of the wisdom and power of the cross declares:

Two great evils consequent upon the fall are weakness and ignorance. Nothing is more worthy therefore of divine benevolence and wisdom than to allow that one race (the Jews) should discover the helplessness of man, and another (the Greeks) his ignorance. The Jew went upon the first of these searches. He asked for a manifestation of power. He had no conception of philosophy, of principles, of general laws. He looked for the finger, the hand, the arm of the Almighty. The Greek

went upon the second search. He endeavoured to explain phenomena by philosophic theory. The intended result of the Mosaic Law was--'the things which I would do, I cannot do.' The result of Greek philosophy was--'the things which I would know, I cannot discover.' Christ satisfied both these wants, thus experimentally realized; and though the ignominy of the crucifixion made Him to the unbelieving Jew a stumbling-block and to the unbelieving Greek an absurdity, yet He was to the believing Jew God's power and to the believing Greek God's wisdom. And more than this, He was both to both: for by sending His Son into the world God purposed to furnish the believing Jew, not only with the strength which he craved, but with strength also, to satisfy in each case, not merely a want felt, but also a want equally real, although unfelt. Thus God, while He allowed men to discover only half their misery, enabled them in His bounty to realize their whole happiness.¹

We must believe that the Holy Spirit on the basis of the message of the cross can enter the human personality and give him a new mind and a new will. Henry Ward Beecher testified that "I should as soon attempt to raise flowers if there were no atmosphere, or produce fruits if there were neither light nor heat, as to regenerate men if I did not believe there was a Holy Ghost."² John Brown observed, "When men surrender themselves to the Spirit of God, they will learn more concerning God and Christ and the Atonement and Immortality in a week, than they would learn in a lifetime, apart from the Spirit."³

II. The work of teaching.

The work of transforming men requires the Holy Spirit. The ministry of discovering and imparting the truths of God likewise demands a dependence upon Him.

One of my unbelieving professors, commenting on the evidences for the truth of Christianity, compared it to a building with three walls and suggested that some imagine a fourth and accept it as true. He could not. This illustrates the need for the Holy Spirit as stated in I Corinthians 2:9-13:

But just as it is written, 'Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him.' For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things even the depths

of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.

"That which God has prepared for those who love him" is not referring to the future state but to that which we can experience now. "For to us God revealed them through the Spirit . . ." (v. 10a).

What are the truths that the Holy Spirit would teach? Notice 1:30: "but by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption." He wants to impress us with the value of that which God wants to impart to us. A salesman will try to demonstrate all the good qualities of his product. That is what the Holy Spirit does for us. He extols that which Christ offers that we might receive full benefit from all He accomplished for us at the cross. Not only does the Holy Spirit help us to understand truth but to impart it. "Which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thought with spiritual words" (1 Cor. 2:13).

The teacher of the Word of God must depend upon the Spirit of God to communicate God's thoughts properly.

We may take a trip to Europe and upon returning be asked, "What was it like?" Any answer you would give would present a very limited exposure as to what Europe was like. There are those who would hesitate to describe Europe who seem to have no hesitation in giving the last word in relation to Christ and are seemingly satisfied that they have communicated adequately all there is to know. The Holy Spirit desires to uncover new truths and to give us the words to express them.

III. The work of building.

God is engaged in building His church. God uses men to do it. But much as we need the Holy Spirit to transform men and teach so we need the Holy Spirit to build God's Church.

For you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? For when one says, "I

am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men? I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. For we are God's fellow-workers; you are God's field, God's building (I Cor. 3:3, 4, 6, 9).

The problem with the church at Corinth was that they were walking as mere men, not spiritually clothed men. The church cannot be built that way.

The Spirit of God is necessary to mold workers into a team so no one is concerned about who gets the credit. The conflict in that church was over loyalty to leaders but jealousy is just as often found among leaders. The Lord gave some good advice on this problem as the disciples clamored for prominence.

And they said to Him, "Grant that we may sit in Your glory, one on Your right, and one on Your left." . . . And hearing this, the ten began to feel indignant toward James and John. And calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. But it is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:37, 41-45).

Man by his fleshly nature wants to be noticed, wants to be heard and wants full credit for any accomplishment. A successful college basketball coach was asked what was the greatest problem faced. He said it was to bring the former high school stars from an "I" to a "We" concept. This is the ministry of the Holy Spirit in building the body of Christ.

If we insist on giving glory to men instead of Christ we are destined to build that which cannot last, that is, the "wood, hay, and straw" (3:12). It is sad to see how many churches apparently are being built with man in the important place and the evidence is that many encourage it and delight in it. That which is permanent, the "gold, silver, precious stones" (3:12), is built stressing the importance of allegiance to Christ. This person will last though leadership may change and, at times, fail.

The chapter concludes, "So then let no one boast in men. For all things belong to you, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world

or life or death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you, and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God" (I Cor. 3:21-23).

The Holy Spirit wants to use us to transform men, to teach others and to build His church. But so often self gets in the way.

Recently I installed a lawn sprinkler system. When one of the lines had been hooked up it was turned on in order to test it. The sad discovery was made that each sprinkler only sprayed about a three inch circle. The water company was called to test the pressure. Their instruments revealed a loss of 75% of the pressure from the street to the house which necessitated the installation of a new pipe. When this was completed the system worked with a full flow of water.

The power of the Spirit is present in the life of every Christian but often He finds our lines clogged with all manner of fleshly desires so that a full flow of His power is impossible. Drastic action is in order to allow Him free course. We should never be satisfied in our ministries to operate as "mere men."

Elizabeth O'Conner describes the need for Spirit led men as she observes,

The church-in-the-house is a first-century church structure which can have meaning in the twentieth century, but there is no house congregation unless there are persons infused by the Holy Spirit to go out under its guidance. We can discover the twentieth-century structures, learn modern techniques, and originate challenging programs, but these in themselves are not enough. They may win people to our organizations, but not to the living Christ. For this we need men and women abandoned to God, contagiously radiant because in their inner lives a conversation goes on with Him who is Lord. They are the people who fill one's soul with a free, spontaneous worship. Thoughts begin to hurdle the usual boundaries, and you wonder why you ever doubted. In their presence your spirit has wings; you sense the very presence of God.⁴

DOCUMENTATION

1. Rev. Canon Evans, "Corinthians" in New Testament vol. III of The Holy Bible Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1890), pp. 250-51.
2. Henry Ward Beecher, The Encyclopedia of Religious Quotations (Westwood, N. J.: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1965), p. 228.
3. John Brown, The Encyclopedia of Religious Quotations (Westwood, N. J.: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1965), p. 228.
4. Elizabeth O'Conner, The Call To Commitment.