

The Indispensable Role of the Holy Spirit

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John 16.5 - 33

Have you ever had the experience when you had to suddenly leave but before you did you prepared someone to look after things in your absence? Several weeks ago, I made mention of the adage that a follower of Christ should be ready to preach, pray, or die at a moment's notice. In 1994 I was the pastor of *McDiarmid Drive Alliance Church* in Brandon, and I had an intern by the name of Darryl McAuley who incidentally is now the senior pastor of *McDiarmid Drive*. On Monday morning, March 28, 1994, I received a phone call to tell me my older brother who was living in Warsaw, Poland, had been assaulted and seriously injured. To say that that phone call rearranged everything I had planned to do that week is an understatement. My mother and my siblings quickly appointed me as the family member to travel to Warsaw to care for my brother. As I got ready to leave for Poland (which began with having to renew my expired passport), and without knowing how long I would be gone, as best as I could I prepared my intern Darryl who had more than a few concerns about who was going to give oversight to the Church and look after all that I normally looked after. Of immediate concern were Good Friday and Easter which were later that week. Between figuring out how to get to Poland and the details once I got there, I hastily prepared Darryl for my absence. I tried to assure him and guide him what he needed to do and how he would be able to accomplish what lay ahead. To not leave you completely wondering what happened, I was gone for nearly three weeks and during that time God undertook for me and directed my steps in remarkable ways and cared for my brother and me, and Darryl, who did an outstanding job in my absence.

You may have had a similar experience to mine where you had to leave and before you did you prepared someone to look after the things where you usually provided direction, guidance, and oversight. Before you left, you gave instructions to them and told them about the preparations you had made for your absence.

Perhaps that gives us a tidbit of insight into what took place in the final minutes Jesus spent with His disciples before the drama of the cross began to unfold. After eating the Passover meal with His disciples and after Judas had left, Jesus tried to prepare His disciples for the immediate ordeal that would unfold and gave them direction for ministry after He was gone. Jesus had told them beforehand He would leave them and as they realized His death was looming their hearts were troubled. What would happen when Jesus, Whom they loved and believed would be there to lead this new Kingdom He spoke about, was gone? And what about the many people who were trusting in Him? Jesus knew His disciples' hearts were troubled and sought to comfort them and alleviate their fears. He had already told them about the *Spirit of Truth* Whom He would send after His crucifixion, death, and resurrection. He was not going to leave them as orphans; just because He was going away did not mean He would abandon them!

Having emphasized their need to abide in Him, He drew attention to the critical importance of the Holy Spirit. He pointed out to them the provisions that He had made for them; “But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you. ‘I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you.’” (John 16:4). But now as His departure neared, He prepared them for when He would no longer be among them. Sadly, His disciples were so consumed with themselves and their grief over His imminent departure that they did not so much as inquire about Jesus and where He was going.

John 16:5–6 (ESV) ⁵But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ ⁶But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.

From the vantage point of Jesus’ disciples, they definitely did not think Jesus’ leaving was for their benefit. It would only be later when they would realize that it was essential for Jesus to leave because apart from His death and resurrection, God’s plan of redemption would remain incomplete and the grip of sin on people’s lives would not be broken. The cross of Calvary was essential to address the penalty for sin and render the *prince of the power of the air* a defeated foe – there was no other way than for Jesus to fulfill His Father’s will and secure salvation for those who trusted in Him. Once the victory of the cross had been completed, Jesus would also fulfill His promise to not leave them by sending the *Spirit of Truth*. “Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you” (16:7).

The Impact of the Holy Spirit

The arrival of the Holy Spirit would be transformational, beginning with Jesus’ disciples. In this scene from the night before the crucifixion of Jesus, the disciples were dejected and self-absorbed, fear gripped their hearts. In the following hours it would not only be Peter who would abandon Jesus, but all of them. Jesus told them, “Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me” (John 16:32). Mark, the author of the Gospel of Mark, succinctly summed it up, “And they all left him and fled” (Mark 14:50).

However, note the dramatic change after Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was given.

Acts 4:31 (ESV) ³¹And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and **continued to speak the word of God with boldness.**

Acts 5:27–29 (ESV) ²⁷And when they had brought them [Peter and the apostles], they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, ²⁸saying, “We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.” ²⁹But Peter and the apostles answered, “**We must obey God rather than men.**”

Acts 5:41–42 (ESV) ⁴¹Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. ⁴²And every day, in the temple and from house to house, **they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.**

After followers of Jesus Christ had received the fullness of the Holy Spirit, no longer were they restrained by fear; their previously anxious hearts had been empowered with the very same power which had raised Jesus from the dead. Fear had been replaced by unquenchable boldness and intentionality in proclaiming salvation through Jesus Christ.

As we consider the account in John 14 and following, we must confess that we can identify with the apostles' inward focus and troubled hearts because all too often we lack boldness and fail to press forward with the confidence of the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, whose role is indispensable for effective ministry.

The Indispensable Role of the Holy Spirit in the World

Jesus went on to tell His disciples and us about the ***Indispensable Role of the Holy Spirit in the World***. This follows immediately after His preceding comments on the hatred of the world towards His followers. Rather than avoid the world because of the world's hatred towards followers of Christ, believers are to do just the opposite. Remember, it was because of the lostness of the world Jesus left the glories of heaven to come to earth and provide redemption. Jesus' love for the lost and His desire to see them saved, necessitated the work of the Holy Spirit.

John 16:8–11 (ESV) ⁸And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; ¹¹concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

The Holy Spirit is instrumental in convicting the world, not in the sense of pronouncing the world guilty, but in the sense of convincing the world of its perilous condition concerning *sin*, *righteousness*, and *judgment*. Apart from the involvement of the Holy Spirit no one would even be receptive to consider the things of God and their need for salvation. Remember the words of Paul, "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ²in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience" (Eph 2:1–2). All our logic, reasoning, and careful presentation of Bible truth, will never persuade an unbeliever of their lostness and need for the Saviour unless it is accompanied by the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. It is only then that the darkness that enshrouds people's hearts and minds may be penetrated.

2 Corinthians 4:4 (ESV) ⁴In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

The work of the Holy Spirit is three-fold, beginning with,

1. The Holy Spirit Convicts the World Concerning Sin

Since the world does not believe in Jesus and Who He is, they do not believe His claims or His assessment of their lostness. By and large the world doesn't really believe they are sinful and since they dismiss they are sinners, the world sees no need for Jesus. Unless one is first persuaded they are a sinner, they see no need for a Savior. The world's view of what constitutes sin is extremely distorted. The world generally perceives sinners to encompass only those guilty of the most egregious of offences, acts which they consider to be repulsive and vile; however, anything less can be easily dismissed as minor infractions at best – certainly nothing deserving of punishment. Since the world ignores Jesus and His assessment of their condition, it is only as the Holy Spirit moves upon the hearts of the unsaved that a person can become receptive to the things of God and his or her sinful state. **Unless a person is convinced he or she is a sinner, they will never be saved.**

On the one hand unbelievers overlook their sinfulness, but on the other they have an inflated view of their righteousness.

2. The Holy Spirit Convicts the World Concerning Righteousness

The *Helper* Jesus' promised would also convict the world of their righteousness, or more accurately, their distorted view of their righteousness. Over the past decades I have discovered when asking unsaved people about their readiness to give an account of their lives to God, that it is common for them to respond with something like, "I've done the best I could and generally I have done a pretty good job. I think I will be OK." Frequently when they assess their sin and righteousness, they usually select some particularly evil person as their standard, and in comparison to him or her, they appear to be pretty good. Their sins are not nearly as horrid as his or hers and consequently their perception of their righteousness is far superior as well.

It was self-righteous people like that whom Jesus was talking about when He said, "For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." (Mat 9:13). He was not for a moment implying some people on earth were righteous and had no need to be saved; rather He was thinking about those who think they are righteous and reject any need to be saved. In Luke 5:32, Jesus said, "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." One person who considered himself righteous before he encountered the Lord was Paul. He did not think he needed to be saved. But after being saved he assessed his self-righteousness this way,

Philippians 3:4b–8a (ESV) "If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. ⁷But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord."

When the Holy Spirit moves upon people's hearts urging them to compare their righteousness with God's impeccable standard, those who follow that prompting discover their "righteous acts are like filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6, (NIV84)). As they yield to the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, the darkness is pushed aside and their eyes are opened and they see God's standard is far higher than they ever imagined. All of a sudden when they allow the word of God to be their standard, they discover they are far worse sinners than they ever imagined. Those who respond to the convicting work of the Holy Spirit repent of their sins and embrace Jesus Christ as their Savior and join the group of whom Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." (Mat 5:6).

The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin and righteousness, but also,

3. The Holy Spirit Convicts the World Concerning Judgment

Here too, unbelievers who have embraced the world's distortions of truth about what constitutes sin and righteousness, confidently believe they will be commended for their self-directed acts of goodness while overlooking their disregard for God and His demand for holiness. Don Carson makes this assessment, "The world is so depraved it fails to discern what sin, righteousness, and judgment really are; and only by the Spirit's deep convicting work can the world hope to recognize the magnitude of its misconceptions and gross unbelief."¹ The world fails to understand the penalty for sin is death – eternal death. The world fails to realize that they are already under the sentence of judgment. Jesus came so the world might escape the judgment they stand guilty of.

John 3:18 (ESV) ¹⁸Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

When Jesus was questioned about what works people must do to gain eternal life He said, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." (6:29). Refusal to believe the Gospel and place one's faith and trust in Jesus for salvation from their sins will confirm a person's condemnation to hell for all of eternity. It is that outcome the Holy Spirit seeks to convict the lost of.

The Holy Spirit does His convicting work in a variety of ways. Among them is the Holy Spirit tugging on people's hearts for a greater receptivity to the things of God. The Holy Spirit pushes aside the darkness which enshrouds the minds of the unsaved so they might catch a glimpse of their desperate need and hear the invitation of Jesus Christ and believe in Him. Apart from the work of the Holy Spirit, they would never consider spiritual matters. Should an unbeliever read the Bible, the *Spirit of Truth* will be there to illuminate God's word and impress it upon a person's mind.

¹ D. A. Carson, *The Farewell Discourse and Final Prayer of J* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 147.

However, the Holy Spirit also uses God's children in declaring God's truth to the unsaved. Their involvement is apparent in,

John 15:26–27 (ESV) ²⁶“But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.

²⁷And **you also will bear witness**, because you have been with me from the beginning.

In conjunction with the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, the Lord extensively engages believers as His agents in reaching out to the world. Hence people like you and me are ambassadors of God in sharing the Good News of salvation with a lost and dying world. It is true many will dismiss the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, but some will respond and listen to the Gospel of salvation, repent of their sins, and trust in Jesus Christ for their salvation. The work of the Holy Spirit is indispensable in the world. As a consequence it is imperative that we bring the salvation of the unsaved before God's throne of grace in prayer. We must pray the Holy Spirit will be successful in convicting lost people of their sin, righteousness, and judgment, and that they will accept the invitation of Jesus Christ and be saved.

The Indispensable Role of the Holy Spirit Among the Community of Saints

Not only is the *Spirit of Truth* active in convicting the world but He also has an indispensable role among followers of Christ. We have already been introduced to His role as a *Helper, Comforter, or Advocate* Who comes alongside believers and cares for them. It is through the Holy Spirit God dwells within His children and through Whom we commune with God. It is also through the Holy Spirit God impresses His truth upon His followers.

1. The Holy Spirit Completes the Revelation of God

Jesus could not tell His followers everything before He left. It would only be after He had ascended to heaven, they would be able to understand many things. He told them,

John 16:12–13 (ESV) “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

Following Jesus' ascension, the Holy Spirit would direct the authors of the Holy Scriptures so we would have the inspired, authoritative, and inerrant word from God. We do not hold in our hands a book composed merely of the words of men, but rather the Holy Spirit saw to it that we possess the living words of God. And as people read those words, He illuminates them for each reader and impresses them upon their hearts.

Just as everything Jesus said and did was directed by His Father, the truth the Holy Spirit declares comes from Jesus Christ. The Scriptures, Old and New Testament, are the complete revelation from God. And let us always remember, the Holy Spirit will never direct anyone in a manner in conflict with the Scriptures but will illuminate the Scriptures, enabling us to understand them, and will guide God's children in living out His word in their daily lives. Thus,

the Holy Spirit, will often bring to mind a verse of Scripture that is applicable to us, or may prompt us as we navigate through life and seek to be used of God in touching the lives of others in a positive manner. Frequently, the Holy Spirit moves upon our hearts and minds and provides us with insights as we seek to serve Him. Lest anyone construes that to mean that revelation of Scripture continues, such is not the case. Scripture, or special revelation, as we often refer to it is complete. It is so important to realize the obvious, in order for the Holy Spirit to illuminate God's word and apply it to us in practical ways, we need to be students of His word – we need consistently read it.

The second role of the Holy Spirit which Jesus drew attention to was:

2. The Holy Spirit Brings Glory to Jesus Christ

John 16:14 (ESV) He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

The principal role of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Jesus Christ; thus, we see the Trinity functioning in perfect harmony. The Son fulfilled His Father's will and having done so, He sent the Holy Spirit to magnify Himself and dwell within God's children and care for them. It is not incorrect to worship the Holy Spirit since He is also God – the third Person of the Trinity; however, our worship of Him is not to the exclusion of the Father or Son. We have access to the Father in the Name of His Son Jesus Christ and commune with Him through the Holy Spirit. It is essential for followers of Christ to be filled with the Holy Spirit for effectiveness in ministry on His behalf. As the Holy Spirit moves upon the hearts of people and enables believers in ministry, people come to faith in Christ and become more Christ-like.

Above All [with lyrics] - Lenny LeBlanc

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5_cxhf5lSeg&ab_channel=JohnL.Rothra