

31ST MAY 2020

FERINTOSH PARISH CHURCH

WORSHIP AT HOME



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Thomas Watson said, "The Word of God is the instrumental cause of our conversion, the Spirit is the efficient. The ministers of God are only the pipes and organs; it is the Spirit blowing in them that effectually changes the heart. 'While Peter spoke, the Holy Spirit fell on all them that heard the word' (Acts 10:44). It is not the farmer's industry in ploughing and sowing, that will make the ground fruitful, without the early and latter rain. So, it is not the seed of the Word that will effectually convert, unless the Spirit puts forth His Sweet influence, and drops as rain upon the heart.

Therefore, the aid of God's Spirit is to be implored, that He would put forth His powerful voice, and awaken us out of unbelief. If a man knock at a gate of brass, it will not open; but if he come with a key in his hand, it will open: so when God, who has the key of David in His hand (Rev. 3:7) comes, He opens the heart, though it be ever so fast locked against Him."

PSALM 103

1. O Thou my soul, bless God the Lord;
And all that in me is
Be stirred up his holy name
To magnify and bless

2. Bless, O my soul, the Lord thy God;
And not forgetful be
Of all his gracious benefits he
Hath bestow'd on thee.

3. All thine iniquities who doth
Most graciously forgive;
Who thy diseases all and pains
Doth heal, and thee relieve.

4. Who doth redeem thy life, that thou to
Death may'st not go down;
Who thee with loving kindness doth
And tender mercies crown.

5. Who with abundance of good things
Doth satisfy thy mouth;
So that ev'n as the eagle's age,
Renewed is thy youth. Amen

PRAYER

Father, we pray this morning that You would use the sheer wonder of Your word to open our eyes again to this principle that we are saved by faith in Christ alone and not by our works, a principle that lasts throughout the whole of the Christian life, that we live by the same kind of faith that looks away from ourselves and looks to Christ. Help us to gaze upon Him today that all who believe may be thrilled to the very depths of our being that You set your love upon us before the foundation of the world. Help us to worship in spirit and in truth we pray in Jesus name. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING JOHN 14: 12 - 18 (NKJV)

12 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.

13 And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

14 If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.

15 "If you love Me, keep My commandments.

16 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever--

17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

18 I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.

LORD'S PRAYER

*Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.*

SERMON

"I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth" (John 14:16-17).

It is not hard to see how the disciples became so devoted to Jesus and dependent on His personal presence. During the three or so years of His ministry on earth, He had guided them, taught them, rescued them, and revealed God's power to them. According to Jesus, however, one of the most important things He would ever do for His disciples was leave them. Jesus explained why His departure to heaven was for the benefit of his followers: "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth" (John 14:16-17). In heaven, Jesus would be seated in power at the right hand of the Father for their sakes, and in His place on earth He would send the Holy Spirit, who would not merely "dwell with you," but would even "be in you" (John 14:17).

The first thing for us to know about the Holy Spirit is that He is a divine person. This can be seen throughout the New Testament, in which the Spirit is said to decide (1 Cor. 12:11), act (Rom. 8:26), speak (1 Tim. 4:1), and feel (Eph. 4:30), just as any other person does. Therefore, Jesus says that He will send "another Helper," meaning not a different kind of helper but the same kind of helper as Himself. The Holy Spirit is a divine person who takes the place of the divine person who leaves.


The importance of the Spirit's personhood cannot be overstated since the alternative is to think of the Spirit as an impersonal force. Thinking this way, many Christians desire to get more of the Spirit in the same way that we may get power from an electrical socket or fill a balloon with air. They speak of "plugging into" the Spirit and emphasise spiritual techniques or experiences that will "tap into" the Spirit's power. The Holy Spirit is not a mere power, however, but the third person of the divine Godhead, co-equal with God the Father and God the Son. If we think of the Holy Spirit as a mysterious power, our thought will continually be, 'How can I get more of the Holy Spirit?'

If we think of the Holy Spirit as a person, our thought will be, 'How can the Holy Spirit have more of me?' The first thought is entirely pagan. The second is New Testament Christianity.

In Acts 8:9-24, we read of Simon the mage, a spiritual figure who claimed to have faith in Christ and then wanted to purchase the Holy Spirit. Peter rebuked Simon, saying, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!" (Acts 8:20). Acts later tells of the calling of Paul and Barnabas to be the first missionaries. While the believers in Antioch were worshiping, "the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them'" (Acts 13:2). Simon was one who wanted to gain and use God's Spirit as a mystical or magical force, but instead it is the Spirit who gains us and calls us for Christ's work.

In addressing His disciples, Jesus made a second statement about the Holy Spirit. He said that the Holy Spirit is sent by the Father and the Son together as a result of Jesus' finished work on earth. "I will ask the Father," Jesus said, "and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever" (John. 14:16). Jesus had just told the disciples that they would do "greater works" than he had done (referring to the spread of the gospel), that they would pray effectual prayers, and that out of love for Him they would obey his commands (John. 14:12-15). The promise of the Holy Spirit continues that teaching. The sending of the Holy Spirit is not a reward for good behaviour, but instead is Jesus' part of this relationship of mutual devotion. He would send the Holy Spirit to empower the disciples' life of gospel witness, prayer, and good works. Together in the joined grace for our salvation, the Father would give the Spirit and the Son would send the Spirit, to carry forward Christ's saving work in the gospel after His resurrection and ascension into heaven.

Christ's work of revelation did not conclude with the Spirit's inspiration of the Bible, but He continues to reveal God and His salvation today through the Spirit's illuminating work. It is only as the Spirit shines on the heart that anyone understands and believes God's Word today and is saved.



The Holy Spirit does this by lighting up the Scriptures to us with the glory which beams from the Saviour's person and throne above. The Holy Spirit comes alongside and works on Christ's behalf within us so that, as Paul put it, the Word shines "in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6).

The grace of God is revealed to us by Christ through His Spirit by means of the Word. This reality explains the emphasis that Jesus gives in describing the Holy Spirit as "the Spirit of truth" (John 14:17). It was by the Spirit that these disciples were able to write the New Testament: "The Helper, the Holy Spirit..., will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (John 14:26). It is by the same Spirit that the glory of Christ is revealed to believers in the Word: "He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you" (John 16:14).

Please also notice the close connection between the Spirit of God and the Word of God. Christianity is not a religion of mystical insight, intuition, or ritual technique, but of revealed truth through the Word of God. It is largely because of mistaken views regarding the Holy Spirit that so many Christians today are suspicious of believers who are devoted to knowing Christ's truth and who revere the Bible as the very Word of God, given by the Spirit to lead us into a true knowledge of divine revelation.

For many, being spiritual means being non-dogmatic and imprecise. But according to Jesus, to be spiritual is to be biblical, for the Spirit is the "Spirit of truth" who through the Scriptures "will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13). This revelation will give us more than head-knowledge! But it will not give us less. Therefore, Paul says that the way for us to progress spiritually is to "be transformed by the renewal of your mind," so that we may "discern what is the will of God" through the truth of God's Word (Rom. 12:2).

Without the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, man in sin is spiritually dead, so that he will not and cannot accept the things of God's Spirit. Paul explains: "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14). This gives believers even more reason to prize the truth revealed to us by Christ through the Spirit, relying not on worldly wisdom but on God's revealed Word, the bible.

What hope is there for you if you do not know the Holy Spirit or even understand God's Word? The answer is the very work of Christ. Christ is the prophet, and He sets Himself before you as the perfect revelation of the glory and grace of God. Also, through the Spirit-inspired Scriptures He declares to you His priestly work to gain the pardon of sins through His own shed blood. As King of heaven, He calls you to salvation through simple faith in His Word. As Prophet, Priest and King today, Jesus invites you to receive all of His work for you which He will then continue in you by His Spirit, if you will receive Him in humble, repentant faith. "Behold, now is the favourable time," he says; "behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2).

What is the application for believers? Jesus' teaching was designed to comfort His disciples with the knowledge of his continuing work in them by the Holy Spirit. We should be greatly encouraged by the power of Christ available to us through the Spirit, who comes alongside us and calls within us so that we can achieve our potential as born-again citizens of the kingdom of Christ.

So far in this chapter, Christ has told His disciples of three things they will do after He departs, and it turns out that these correspond to his own three-fold office. Jesus said that whoever believes "will also do the works that I do," even "greater works than these" (John 14:12), referring mainly to the spread of the gospel throughout the world. But how are we to take up Christ's prophetic office, telling people today about His gospel of salvation? The answer is the mighty help of the Holy Spirit, who gives us words to say (Mt 10:19-20). Jesus added that we would pray in His name and receive what we ask. But can we really be mighty in the priestly ministry of prayer?



PRAYER

The answer is the indwelling help of the Holy Spirit. Not that we always know what we should pray, but, Paul writes, "the Spirit helps us in our weakness" and intercedes for us even in our own prayers (Rom. 8:26-27).

So how do we receive the Spirit? Remember that He is a Person, not an impersonal force that we tap into. According to the Bible, we receive the Spirit by trusting in Jesus Christ. Paul asked the Galatians, "Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?" (Gal. 3:2). The answer was by faith alone. We then experience the Spirit's power through the Word that He inspired, which "is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Lastly, we receive the Spirit's work in our lives by asking. In His great parable on prayer, Jesus commented that even earthly fathers give good gifts to their children. "How much more," Jesus concluded, "will the heavenly Father give the Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:13).

HYMN

What a friend we have in Jesus
All our sins and griefs to bear
And what a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer

Oh, what peace we often forfeit
Oh, what needless pain we bear
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer

Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged
Take it to the Lord in prayer

Can we find a friend so faithful
Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness
Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Father in heaven, bless Your Word to us today. Write it on our hearts and use it to the saving of the lost and to the comfort and strengthening in faith of all Your people. Lord, in the midst of all the crises of life, turn our eyes upon Jesus that we may look full in His wonderful face. We pray that however much we may lament the circumstances in which we live, oh God, may we never cease to boast of Christ and to glory in the cross. And, oh Lord, even in difficulty enable us to keep the Gospel hope brightly burning before us. We thank You for the security and the assurance of faith in Christ alone. Lord, let us live in the joy of that assurance and in its power to go out to reach the lost for Christ. We praise You on this Lord's Day for the assurance that Calvary has made a full atonement. Hear our prayer and grant us Your very richest blessing we pray in Jesus' holy and precious name. Amen.

BENEDICTION

And now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all this day and forevermore, Amen.

For your information: There is a Pentecost service led by the Moderator of the General Assembly, the Right Reverend Dr Martin Fair. This service, and resources relating to it, are now available at the following link:
<https://stream1.churchofscotland.org.uk/worship/weekly-worship/pentecost>.

There is an audio version of the spoken parts of the service, available at standard rates, and this can be accessed on 0131 378 7895. The service will be available for viewing on the church website and Facebook page at 10am on Sunday 31 May.