

Doctrine - The Holy Spirit

Sign Title: The Holy Spirit

October 24, 2010

Good to see you this morning! My name is Kurt and I am one of the pastors. If you are new, I would like to welcome you. This fall, we are in a series of studies called, "Doctrine - What do we believe?" The purpose of these studies are to go over the basics of our faith. This week, we will talk about the Holy Spirit. Before we do that, I would like to tell you about an experience I went through as a teenager at summer camp.

I grew up attending a Christian boys camp in the Adirondack mountains of New York state. After attending for years, I was old enough to qualify for the counselor in training program, which lasted the entire summer. It involved weeks of hiking in the mountains, a marathon, survival skills training and a mile swim. At the end of the summer, you put your training into practice when they took you into the woods with a few supplies and left you to survive for three days. It reminded me of *Man vs. Wild* for teenagers.

I remember them dropping me off in the woods and, at first, it was a welcome break from the intensity. I made camp and tried to start a fire, unfortunately, I couldn't get it to light. The good news was there was no food for the bear to eat in my camp, the bad news is that if a bear came into my camp, I was the only item on the menu. The other challenge is I kept second guessing myself on which roots were good for food and which were poisonous. Rather than guess wrong and have them haul me out in a body bag three days later, I elected not eat.

Surviving for three days without food and warmth was a challenge but it wasn't the toughest part. The toughest part was three days of complete isolation. Nobody to talk to. Nobody to help if I needed it. The isolation was hauntingly scary.

In the 17th and 18th centuries a belief developed called deism. Ben Franklin, one of our founding fathers, was a deist. Deists believed God existed, because they could see his handiwork in creation, but they reasoned that since so much of life was not explainable by the laws of science, God wasn't personally involved with us anymore. They reasoned God stepped back from our lives and we were absolutely alone. If being alone in the woods for three days is hauntingly scary, being alone forever in life is absolutely terrifying.

While deism as a belief peaked in the 17th and 18th centuries, it is making a come back today. Churches are filled. People call Christ their savior, but when it comes to everyday life, we think we're all alone. We are quick to turn to google rather than God for the answer. When we are having a relationship problem, we turn to Amazon for a self-help book rather than get on our knees to confess our sin. Is it true? Has God left us alone and it is up to our wit alone to solve life's problems?

In John chapter 14-16, Jesus prepared his disciples for his death. Look what Jesus says.

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, John 14:16 (ESV)

The word *helper* in this verse is rich in meaning. It means comforter, helper to time of need, an advocate. It means we are not left alone.

Another important word in this verse is the word *another*. In the Greek, there are two words that can be translated as *another* in English. One means another of a *different* kind, the other word means another of the *same* kind. The word used here is the second one, *another of the same kind*. Jesus said when he returned to the Father, he would ask the Father to send to them another helper that would be just like him and this helper would be with them forever. Even though Christ was gone, they would never be alone.

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. John 16:7 (ESV)

Jesus tells them when he leaves they are getting an upgrade. Jesus is talking about the Holy Spirit that was sent from the father, through the son and arrived at Pentecost. How is the Holy Spirit an upgrade? When Jesus was with them in the flesh, he voluntarily limited his attributes to be a man and he was in one place at one time. He dwelled outside of them. The Holy Spirit is fully God but unlike Jesus, he would not be outside of them, he would reside inside of them. He transcends space and time and will be with them no matter where they are. This promise is good for us. The Holy Spirit is also with us all the time. This morning we are going to look at the Holy Spirit and learn just a few ways the Holy Spirit helped the first Christians and how he helps us today; so we are never alone.

How does the Holy Spirit help us?

The Holy Spirit is the means for victory in our battle with sin.

And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: John 16:8 (ESV)

The Holy Spirit is great at producing conviction. Conviction sounds like what you *don't* want in your life but conviction of sin is great stuff. The Holy Spirit acts like the spiritual nerve endings of our soul. Nerves are good because while they give us pain, they also let us know when we are hurting ourselves. Slide your hand near a hot burner plate and your nerves will warn you. Touch the hot burner plate, your nerves will get your hand off in a hurry. If your nerves didn't hurt so much, you would lean your hand on the burner plate and wonder why you smelled BBQ and not realize it was you!

The Holy Spirit's conviction of sin is the safety mechanism for our soul. When the Holy Spirit convicts us of something, he is letting us feel pain to keep us from wounding ourselves more deeply. Thank goodness for conviction.

One of the struggles is when we give our lives to Christ and the Holy Spirit comes to live in our heart, we have much greater conviction of sin. Before coming to Christ, we could sin and get away with it, after coming to Christ, it is like a hot iron on our conscience when we sin because we are much more sensitive to what grieves God.

Even though we repent of sin, it has a way of luring us back to a few weeks later. We start a cycle of sinning, grieving the Holy Spirit, confessing and repenting of sin then later on going right back to it days or weeks later. Is there any end to this crazy cycle? It would seem like the Holy Spirit should do more than just grieve us when we sin. Wouldn't it be great if he helped us not sin in the first place? He does.

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of

the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. Romans 8:5–11 (ESV)

This is a long passage and it may sound confusing but it is great stuff, because it holds the secret to breaking habitual sin.

This passage deals with the affections of our mind. When we have a habitual sin, we give in to again and again because we love it. We love the thrill of it till it is over. Two minutes then we want to hate ourselves for weeks. We are trying to find satisfaction and joy through our sin. That is why we keep going back to it and giving in to it. But when the Holy Spirit comes into our life, he gives us a new ability to perceive the things of God. We now have new affections and a new source of joy. We now have an appetite for God and desire to enjoy knowing and growing in him. The more we satisfy ourselves in God, the more joyful our experience of that satisfaction. The more we allow ourselves to be satisfied in God, the less we desire the satisfaction of lesser sinful pleasures. To break sinful pleasures, don't try to deny yourself the pleasure of sin, rather, satisfy yourself in the pleasures of God, which are much more satisfying than any pleasures sin could ever provide.

So pretend you are struggling with the sin of materialism. You get online and are racking up the credit card bills. The UPS driver now has your address preprogrammed into his navigation system. Little brown boxes of stuff arrive on

your doorstep almost daily. How do you stop your addiction to worshipping and purchasing stuff? There are two ways to handle it. One is on our own strength where we tell ourselves to deny the pleasure of purchasing. We write 500 times on a piece of paper, "I will not shop on the internet." How well does that work? Not well at all. It is like writing, "I will not enjoy pleasure." We are created to crave pleasure.

What happens if your eyes were suddenly opened to a pleasure that is better than anything we can purchase? Rather than denying ourselves pleasure, move on to the richer and better pleasures of knowing and enjoying God. That is how you leave the lesser pleasures behind. The Holy Spirit opens our eyes to the things of God and gives us the capacity to enjoy them. The question is, will we take the time to enjoy the joys and pleasures of knowing God which are offered to us today?

The Holy Spirit comforts us in our troubles.

So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied. Acts 9:31 (ESV)

One of the times when the Holy Spirit works in powerful ways are in times of trouble. He doesn't leave us alone in trouble but he comforts us. How does he do this? The Holy Spirit assures us of God's love for us.

When I pay hospital visits to brothers and sisters in Christ, I almost always hear them say, "Pastor, I don't know how people could go through this without God." Why do they say that? All night long they were pouring out their heart to God and the Holy Spirit worked supernaturally in their life to tell them they are

loved, to remind them God is good, to assure them of God's love for them. The Holy Spirit supernaturally assures us we can rest our lives into his hands. No matter what happens, even if they die, it will be OK because God loves us.

Christ died for us.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:7 (ESV)

The Holy Spirit produces relational harmony.

eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Ephesians 4:3 (ESV)

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. 2 Corinthians 13:14 (ESV)

The church is a very unique place because it is where relationships are supposed to work. That doesn't mean everybody is best friends but there exists a supernatural unity between the people of God that comes from the Holy Spirit indwelling and leading God's children. Work in the school system, and you will not find this unity. Work at Pure Fishing, and you will not find this unity. The Holy Spirit, working in the church, produces unity between people of different ages, backgrounds, intellects and cultures as they center around Jesus and stay in tune with the Holy Spirit.

Let me just be honest. Very few churches experience the unity of the Holy Spirit. I am thankful to say compared to some churches I have pastored, the unity of Faith EFC is strong and it is precious to me. This week, as I read Galatians 5 while preparing the Digging Deeper questions for this message, I was struck by how many works of the flesh are different types of divisions. The

leaders at Faith EFC plan to protect this unity and not let us become known as a church of different groups.

Another way Satan likes to ruin the unity God desires for us to experience is through church bosses. They are people who have the clout to carry a following and they are a rogue self-appointed leaders who refuse to listen to established authority in the church. In the Bible we find one of these divisive leaders, his name is Diotrephes.

I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority. 3 John 9 (ESV)

Diotrophes kept wanting to be first in everything. He had to be the center of attention and power. He has a serious ego problem.

I think I have met this guy a couple times. These kind of church bosses can quote the Bible backward and forward. They may have held high positions in former churches or Christian camps or in the business world. But rather than respecting and supporting church leadership, they snipe at leadership and pick apart at the unity little by little. I have met these kinds of people. They can cause immense damage. If one arises at Faith EFC, I will do my best to kick these kinds of people out. That may sound harsh, but unity of the Spirit in the church is a precious things and it must be maintained.

The Holy Spirit is Prozac for the depressed.

Before I talk about this, I want you to know, I recognize the need for psychological medication. There are real physiological disorders in the brain that need medication and I don't want to ignore that. I don't want anybody going home and throwing their medicine in the trash. That being said, I believe a good

portion of the depression we go through is spiritually, not physically, rooted.

When people are led by the spirit, look at a defining quality of their life.

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Romans 14:17 (ESV)

And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, 1 Thessalonians 1:6 (ESV)

Who is the creator of joy and happiness? It is God. The Holy Spirit is God living in us. The source of all joy, the creator of happiness lives within us. The more we press into Christ, the more we are led by the spirit, the more we are in step with the spirit through prayer and study of God's Word, the more joyful we become. That joy comes in spite of our circumstances.

I have been there guys. I awoke morning after morning when the dark clouds of depression would not lift. I felt totally hopeless day after day. I know there is a comfort and joy that only comes from the Holy Spirit in those dark hours. Feast on God, read his word, cry out to him in prayer. There is joy to be found. The Holy Spirit enables us to experience it. In those dark hours, we are not alone.

The Holy Spirit supernaturally empowers us to share Christ.

There are many projects that we are involved with in life. God is not committed to help all of them succeed. I want to pour my efforts into projects that are close to the heart of God. I want to give my energies to projects God wants to succeed.

I want to tell you about one project God is committed to and the Holy Spirit will empower. It is the project of sharing Christ.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1:8 (ESV)

Remember what Peter was like when Jesus was on trial. A junior high girl asked him if he was part of Jesus’ group and he was swearing up and down he never heard of Jesus. Talk about wimping out. Talk about not having an ounce of backbone for a guy that spent the last 3 years with Jesus. All Peter could think of was his own skin.

What happens after the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost? Mr. Wimpy turns into Mr. Spicy. Peter gets up and starts preaching about Jesus. Look at the conclusion of his sermon.

Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.” Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:36–38 (ESV)

Peter gave his first altar call and 3,000 came forward. The church turned into a mega-church after one sermon! Why is that? The Holy Spirit empowers Christians to share about Christ. The Holy Spirit cultivates the heart of the lost so they are receptive to Christ. The Holy Spirit makes witnessing affective.

Last week I know many of us experienced rejection as we tried to invite friends to church. Don’t be discouraged. Don’t give up. The Holy Spirit will get behind your efforts. You are not alone.

Why don’t I experience more of the Holy Spirit’s power in my life?

I want to give you three possible reasons why we don’t experience more of the Holy Spirit’s empowering in our life.

Christ may not be my Savior and Lord.

When we trust Christ for forgiveness of sin and ask him to be the king of our life, in that moment, he gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who gives us a new set of affections for Christ, he gives us a new level of sensitivity to sin and he begins to lead us in ways we never experienced before.

I believe one of the reasons people attend church yet know so little of the Holy Spirit's empowering is because they aren't Christians. They have trusted Christ as the savior for their sin, but they haven't put him in charge of their life. Their identity is the car they drive, the house they own, the job they hold, the money in the bank. Christ says, I don't just want to save you from your sin, but I am to be the new identity of your life. There are many who fill churches but Christ is nothing more than a life insurance policy to cash in after they are dead. That isn't salvation. Salvation involves repenting of anything besides Christ as the magnetic center of our life. Is that you this morning? If it is, I invite you to trust in Christ alone for salvation today.

Am I quenching the spirit or being filled with the spirit?

Do not quench the Spirit. 1 Thessalonians 5:19 (ESV)

The Holy Spirit can be quenched. One of the things the Holy Spirit does is prompts us. He prompts us to make phone calls. He prompts us about people to meet. He prompts us of sin to repent of. When he lays those things on our heart, we can ignore him because he speaks in a gentle voice. Ignoring the promptings is called quenching the spirit. We all do that from time to time. When

we do that, he will draw back from leading us but he will keep gently tapping on our shoulder.

The Bible tells us that instead of quenching the Spirit, we should seek to be filled by the Holy Spirit.

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but **be filled with the Spirit**, Ephesians 5:18 (ESV)

The picture is that just as alcohol controls a person, we should seek for the Holy Spirit to control our lives. As we go through the day, continually ask God what he would have you do and what he would have you say. He will answer.

Am I grieving the Holy Spirit or repenting of sin?

And **do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God**, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Ephesians 4:30 (ESV)

We grieve the spirit by sin, especially willful sin. When we sin, our intimacy with God is frustrated. The Holy Spirit feels silent in our lives and we feel like we are living alone. How do we get that back? Repentance! God rejoices when we repent of our sin.

For **godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret**, whereas worldly grief produces death. 2 Corinthians 7:10 (ESV)

This morning, is there something God is calling you to repent of? Has the vibrancy of your spiritual life gone flat? Is there intentional sin God is calling you to repent of.

How can we encourage the Holy Spirit to show up in power at Faith EFC?

(The Holy Spirit) **He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you**. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. John 16:14–15 (ESV)

Interestingly, the Holy Spirit doesn't have a name. His name is more of a description. He is the Holy Spirit as in opposition to an unclean spirit. He is also called the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ. Why is that? Why does the Holy Spirit work anonymously? It is because his job is to platform Christ, not himself. He is committed to the exaltation of Christ. When we as a church focus on exalting Christ, that is a project the Holy Spirit is highly committed to support.

Conclusion

What do you do for three days in the woods by yourself when your campfire doesn't start, you have nothing to eat and nothing to do? You remember that no matter what it may seem like, you are not alone. Just as I wasn't alone in the woods, we are not alone in this world. No matter how dark the night, no matter how strong the temptation, no matter how depressed you feel, you are not fighting it alone. The Holy Spirit is in you and he is with you. He will comfort you. He will guide you. He will bring you joy. This week, remember, you are not alone.



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