

WE BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

Zechariah 4

The Bible talks much about the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity, along with the Father and the Son. Now, the word “trinity”, as many of you know, is not in the Bible, just as the word “rapture” is not in the Bible. But both of these words are used to designate a clear Biblical teaching. And the word “trinity” refers to the equality of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. All three are God. Now, there are not three Gods in Heaven. Deut. 6:4 clearly says, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one!” Nor are the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all just 1/3 of God that makes up the whole. Nor does God reveal Himself sometimes as Father, sometimes as Son, and sometimes as Holy Spirit. All are present all of the time. And yet, there is still only one God. You say, “Preacher, that makes no sense at all”. I know it doesn’t. That’s the mystery of the Trinity. It doesn’t make sense. But we know it is true because the Bible says it is true. Someone once said that if you try to figure out the Trinity you just might lose your mind, but that if you don’t believe in Trinity you will lose your soul.

The clearest statement of the Trinity is in Matthew 28:19 where Jesus says, “Go and baptize in the name in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit”. Here it is clear that Jesus considered that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were all equal. In fact, I’ve heard that there is at least one denomination takes this verse so literally that when they baptize a new convert they plunge him under three times – once in the name of the Father, once in the Son, and once in the name of the Holy Spirit. I tell you, I’m glad we don’t do it that way. I had a hard enough time getting Chris Spencer up just once. And I had a hard enough time getting Emily Smith down just once.

We see in 1 Peter 1:2 another mention of the Trinity, and this time it is in reference to salvation. There Peter says that his readers were elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. And so we see that all three members of the Godhead – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – have an essential role in salvation.

But I want you to look at one more verse this morning that shows us the equality of the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son, and also sums up the work of the Holy Spirit in human hearts. Look at 2 Cor. 13:14. Notice that Paul prays for the communion of the Holy Spirit to be with the Corinthians. The word “communion” is the Greek word for “fellowship”. And it means sharing our hearts with God and God sharing His heart with us, and the intimacy of that relationship. Beloved, that is the awesome place of the Holy Spirit in a believer’s life. In the Holy Spirit, God comes

down and communes with us and becomes real. And today I want us to walk through the Scriptures and stop along the way from time to time and examine some of the ways that He does it.

The first thing that the Holy Spirit does in any person's life is that He **brings upon them conviction of their sins**. Jesus said in John 16:8 that when the Holy Spirit comes into the world He will convict the world of sin. Have you ever known anyone who could not speak five words without at least one of them being a curse word? And they thought nothing about it. It was just as natural for them to curse as breathe. And how many people in America are living in adultery today without one twinge of guilt? I'll tell you how people can live this way. They have not yet had their spiritual eyes opened to the destructive nature of sin and the reality of hell. They may hear a sermon from time to time on sin, death, and hell, but their hearts are as hard as stone to it. Paul explains it in 2 Cor. 4:4 by saying that the gods of this world have blinded the minds of those who believe not. And there is only one thing, or one Person, who can remove the blinders, and that is the Holy Spirit.

The second verse of Amazing Grace begins with the words, "T'was grace that taught my heart to fear...." Fear what? Fear the consequences of our sins. And that is so true. We only know about the awful nature of our sins by grace. We only know the horrors of being hell-bound by grace. And that grace comes to us by the voice of the Holy Spirit. The Bible tells us in Acts 2:37 that when the people heard Peter's sermon at Pentecost that they were cut to the heart. They were smitten by the Holy Spirit, and they knew that they had sinned. And they cried out to Peter and the rest of the disciples, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

I remember the night that the Holy Spirit peeled away the blinders from my eyes. I was a happy church-going pagan, but I didn't even know it. If you would have asked me that afternoon if I were saved, I would have said yes without a doubt. But in a split second, sitting in a revival meeting in my home church it all changed. All of sudden a feeling of horror swept over my soul. I didn't know where it came from, but it was a terrible questioning of everything that I had ever believed. Was God real? Was the Bible true? And I was absolutely devastated in my soul. Looking back on it now, I can see that it was the Holy Spirit stripping away from me a false faith that would have allowed me to go to hell. And after a four year search trying to get it back, the Holy Spirit confirmed to me that I never had it to start with, and that was the night that I asked Jesus to come into my life and He saved me. But had it not been for the Spirit's work, I would still be lost in my sins. And if you are saved today, so would you.

But the Holy Spirit not only convicts the world of sin, Jesus also says in John 16:8 that **He convicts the world of righteousness**. He convicts the world that of the only way to become righteous, and that is by trusting in Jesus. So the Spirit first points out the sinner's sin, then points out the sinner's Savior.

But the Holy Spirit not only convicts of sin and of the Savior, but He also **does the saving**. Titus 3:5 – “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy has He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit”. Both the word regeneration and renewing mean a new birth or a re-creation. And Titus says that when we are saved we are made new by the Holy Spirit.

There's something else the Holy Spirit does for us. And that is, **He gives us the blessed assurance that we are saved**. Rom 8:16 – “The spirit bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God”. Do you remember how the Holy Spirit gave you a peace deep within your heart after you were saved? Whether it was an emotional mountain peak or not, there was just something inside of you that made you know that you were God's child. You can't explain it, you just know it. Years ago that is what one child told me. I was counseling with him after he was saved and asked him, “How do you know that you are saved?” And he responded by saying, “I just know”. That is the work of the Holy Spirit.

I will never forget the time when we were still living in Aliceville, when I woke up in the middle of the night, and all of a sudden a voice, not an audible voice, but a clear voice none-the-less screamed in my ears these words of Scripture, “For you are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body...” It was so real I wrote it down in my Bible. And it was such joy to receive that word of confirmation of my salvation by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit leads. “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God” (Rom. 8:14) Acts 8 tells us that the Holy Spirit spoke to Philip and told him to go to the Ethiopian eunuch in his chariot and share the gospel with him. In Acts 10 the Holy Spirit spoke to Peter and told him to go to Cornelius's house. And friends, if you are truly a child of God, the Holy Spirit will lead you, too. He will lead you to go to the lost, He will lead you to go to the poor, He will lead you to go to the sick, He will lead you to take a stand for righteousness. And if you never have any promptings from Him to do a good work in Jesus' name, then you need to ask yourself, “Am I really a son of God?”

There are other ministries of the Holy Spirit that I want us to notice briefly. **Power to witness.** Acts 1:8: “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes

upon you, and you shall be my witnesses.....” **Wisdom to pray.** Jude 20 says that we should be “praying in the Holy Spirit”. But the Holy Spirit also **prays for us.** Rom. 8:26: “For we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered”.

The Holy Spirit also **convicts us.** This is not the conviction unto salvation for the sinner. This is conviction unto sanctification for the saint. After committing adultery and murder David declared to God, “For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer” (Ps. 32:4). David was experiencing the awful conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit and it drove him to repent of his sins. For you see, friends, the Holy Spirit convicts us to live holy lives.

The Holy Spirit **comforts us.** Paul writes that He is the God of all comfort, that He comforts us in all of our tribulations (2 Cor. 1:3-4). Phil Waldrep told a story about a couple that he knew that had just lost a new born baby. Phil went to visit them while they were still in the hospital. And Phil said that the man told him, “Our hearts are breaking, but we have never in all of our lives felt such peace and the presence of God”.

And that brings us to the last ministry of the Holy Spirit that I want to mention this morning. And that is His **eternal presence in our lives.** John 14:16 says, “And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever; Even the Spirit of truth...” You may have heard me tell the story about a man in Aliceville who wrote an autobiography, and the title of his book were the words, “With Me”. When I heard that I thought, “That sounds kind of prideful”. But then the Holy Spirit convicted me of my sin of being judgmental. Because I found out that in that book title that dear Christian man was giving witness to the fact that all of his life, through all the trials and tribulations and ups and downs, God had always been with him. He was never, ever alone.

Oh, beloved, what a precious truth!! When you lose your job, when you lose your house, when you lose your wife, when you lose your children, when you lose your health, when you lose it all, if the whole world should turn its back on you and one day you find yourself sitting all alone in the middle of a garbage dump, you are not alone, for God is right there with you. And He is there in the Person of the Holy Spirit.

Beloved, we could never, ever, overemphasize the importance of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives as Christians and in this world as well. But I want to show you this importance by spending just a few minutes in the book of Zechariah. Turn there with me, please, to Zechariah 4 (read v. 1-7). Zechariah was a prophet to the

Jewish repatriates who returned from Babylonian exile to resettle Judah. They were led by Zerubbabel, and when they arrived he became governor. And as governor Zerubbabel led them in their effort to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. But when they began they encountered much opposition, to the point that they were forced to suspend the work for almost 20 years. And you can imagine the discouragement that Zerubbabel was experiencing.

So in chapter 4 we read of an unusual vision that God sent to Zechariah with which to encourage the discouraged governor. And in the vision Zechariah saw a candelabrum with a bowl on top, with seven pipes running from the bowl to each of seven candleholders, forty nine pipes in all. And on either side of the candelabrum was an olive tree. And v. 12 tells us that a pipe ran from each tree to the bowl.

Now, this strange vision is fraught with spiritual truth that was precious to Zerubbabel and is just as precious to us today. So please listen closely as I try to paint the picture for you. First of all, the candelabrum is a symbol of Israel. And when all of its candles were shining brightly, it was symbolic of the light of God's knowledge that Israel would shed on all of the Gentile nations around her. It was the OT version of Jesus' words to NT believers when He said, "You are the light of the world". But the candelabrum in Zechariah's vision had to have a source of oil or it was useless. And this was provided by the two olive trees on each side of it. Oil flowed from the trees to the bowl on top, and then the oil flowed from the bowl down to the seven candle holders from the forty nine pipes. So each candle holder had an abundance of oil and each candle shined brightly. But if the oil ever ran out, so would the light.

So what's the point, preacher? Well, here is the precious point. The oil in the vision is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. And when the oil flowed into the bowl and then down to each candleholder, it was symbolic of the Holy Spirit that God was about to pour into Israel. And as the seven pipes running to each candleholder symbolized, it would be an abundance of the Spirit. And as the Spirit of God abundantly flowed into Israel they would light up the darkened world around them and bring great glory to God. And they would also complete the building of the temple.

But notice again what the word of the Lord was to Zerubbabel in v. 6 & 7. God is saying to him, "Zerubbabel, you won't rebuild the temple by any human means. Not by your diplomacy, not by your intellect, not by the number of your army, not by anything but by My Spirit. But Zerubbabel! Do you see that mountain in front of you; that great obstacle that has been hindering you for almost 20 years? Well, Zerubbabel, that mountain will be leveled to a plain! It will be gone! And you will finish the temple, put a capstone on it, and cry out, 'Grace, grace be upon all that

come into it”. And I don’t have to tell you what joy that vision brought to Zerubbabel. God had not forsaken His people. He was about to act, His people were about to become a shining light to the Gentiles again, and they were about to rejoice.

Well, beloved, is it not easy to see how this vision applies to you and me today? If you are truly saved, even if you are backslidden and out of fellowship with God, you still have a desire deep in your soul for something better for Christ. Something better in your personal life, something better in your family, something better in your church. Something which will cause your light to shine in a brighter way for the glory of God. If you have absolutely no spiritual desire it is because you have no Holy Spirit. But God is saying to His people, “All that you wish and pray for in your life for my glory, it will not happen by anything that you do in the strength of your flesh, but only by My Spirit”.

Think back for a moment at all the Holy Spirit does for us. He first convicts us that we were lost without Christ. Then He convicts us that Jesus is our only hope, and then when we place our faith in Jesus, He regenerates and renews us – He applies the cleansing blood of Jesus to our sinful souls and we are saved from our sins. And after we are saved the Spirit leads us, the Spirit empowers us to witness and to pray aright, and also prays for us Himself. The Holy Spirit convicts us and comforts us, and is our constant companion. And now we see from Zechariah that all we accomplish in God’s service is done by the power of the Holy Spirit. OH, can you see what a precious indispensable gift from God is the Holy Spirit!

Now, I want to make two observations as we close this morning. First of all, I want us to understand that anything worthwhile we seek to accomplish for the glory of God will be met with opposition. Satan did not want God’s temple to be rebuilt, and he did all that he could do to stop it. And he did stop it for almost 20 years. And you can be sure that when you attempt to do anything that will bring honor and glory to God in your own life or in the life of your family, you will face satanic opposition. And it will seem like a mountain in front of you. And the same thing goes for a church. When we attempt great things for Heaven’s sake we can expect great opposition from Hell. But God is saying to all of us, “The opposition doesn’t matter! By My Spirit that mountain in front of you will be leveled and you will gain great victory”.

And the second observation that I want make is that more than anything in this world, we need to daily cry out to God for the filling of His precious Holy Spirit. God says through the apostle Paul, “Be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18). And the meaning is to be controlled by the Spirit. And that is not a suggestion, it is a command, and the reason is obvious. Without the filling of God’s Spirit we will fall flat on our faces. Oh, but here is the good news! Jesus said in Luke

11:13, “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!” And Jesus said in John 7:37, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink”. Do you want to be filled with the Holy Spirit? Then just ask.

But let me tell you this. Before you ask, you must confess. You must confess and forsake your sins. After the heavy hand of God was on David for so long and he just couldn't take it anymore he cried out to God and asked for forgiveness. He says in Ps. 32:5, “I acknowledged my sin to You... and You forgave the iniquity of my sin”. And when you confess your sins, the Holy Spirit does His cleansing work in your life, and then He fills you with His sweet presence and peace and power.