

Series: Acts

Lesson: #41

Title: The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit

Scripture: Acts 13: 1-4

Date: 10-23-08

Place: Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Princeton, New Jersey

God has an elect people whom he has determined to save OUT OF all corners and people of this world in Christ Jesus. This was the Lord's word to Abraham **Genesis 22: 17: In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; 18: And in thy seed (Christ the Seed-Gal. 3: 16) shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.**

**Galatians 3:8: And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. 9: So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.**

This gospel of Christ the Seed was preached unto Abraham and this same gospel shall be preached to all God's elect scattered throughout the entire world. God uses his church to do so. The very wisdom of God which chose his people in Christ, the very wisdom which accomplished the work whereby mercy and peace have met in harmony in Christ our Substitute, is the same wisdom of God which chose that the instrument he would use to proclaim his gospel would be his church in this world.

The believer--who is perfectly complete in Christ to enter glory right now--remains in this world because God choose to use saved sinners to carry his gospel to his elect and save them through the gospel of our glorified Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, **for after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe** (1 Corinthians 1:21.)

In our text tonight, we have the account of how the Lord faithfully sent forth Barnabas and Saul to the Gentile world.

**Proposal:** Just as the work of election, of redemption, and of regeneration is the work of our triune God even so the work of raising up and equipping his vessels of mercy is the work of our Lord. God's ambassadors' are called of God; God gives his saints a heart to recognize his messengers and to support them in God's work; God separates them to the work he would have them to do; God's messengers are filled and led by the Spirit of God. Thus they go forth preaching the gospel of Christ and him crucified.

The emphasis in our text is upon the Holy Spirit and the work he performs. So tonight message is titled: **The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit**

**Divisions:** I. The Person of the Holy Spirit; II. The Work of the Holy Spirit

**Acts 12: 25: And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled *their* ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.**

**Acts 13: 1: Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2: As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. 3: And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid *their* hands on them, they sent *them* away. 4: So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. 5: And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to *their* minister.**

## **I. THE PERSON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

A. The Person of the Holy Ghost is distinct from God the Father and God the Son and is set forth here by the action which the Holy Spirit took.

1. The Holy Ghost takes the action of "speaking." **V2: The Holy Ghost said**
2. The Holy Ghost takes the action of "commanding": **V2: Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work.**
3. The Holy Ghost takes the action of "calling": **V2: The work whereunto I have called them.**
4. The Holy Ghost takes the action of "sending"--**V4: So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost,...**
5. Notice the personal pronouns used here,--**V2: Separate me (for me)...for the work whereunto I have called them.**

A person takes action. A person is made known by the use of personal pronouns. So the Holy Ghost is declared here as a Person--the third person in the Trinity.
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B. Furthermore, the Holy Ghost is declared to be God, one with God the Father and God the Son. The Holy Spirit is God.

1. Scripture declares plainly that only God calls and ordains his servants. As we read of Aaron: **Hebrews 5: 4: And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.**

2. Scripture declares plainly that Christ Jesus the Son of God, when he ascended gave his messengers to the church. **Ephesians 4: 11: And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;**

- When the Lord Jesus sent Annanias to preach to Saul he said this: **Acts 9: 15: But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: 16: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.**
- But this work would be performed through the Person and power of the Holy Ghost filling Saul. When Annanias reached Saul listen to what he says...**Acts 9: 17: And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, *even* Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.**

Notice that the work of saving a sinner is attributed to the Lord Jesus and the work performed in him to the Holy Spirit for God the Holy Spirit is God even as God the Son.

3. Now, here in our text, we find this work attributed to the Holy Ghost.

**V2: Separate me (for me)...for the work whereunto *I* have called them.**

So we see the oneness of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit in the Godhead. The Holy Spirit is truly God.

C. Thirdly, the service, to which the Lord separated and called and sent forth Barnabas and Saul, is said to be *for the Holy Ghost* or *for the work of the Holy Ghost*.

1. It not said here to be the service of God or the service of Christ, or the service of the Church (though Barnabas and Saul *were* the servants of them) but this service is described by the Holy Ghost as a separation "**for me**" and is "**the work whereunto I have called them.**"

2. Being God, the third person in the Trinity, the work of the Holy Ghost is in perfect harmony and one with the work of God the Father and God the Son: Notice the three in One are all three declared by the Lord Jesus in **John 14: 26: But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.**

Here is the point: By God the Holy Spirit calling and ordaining Barnabas and Saul, the eternal power of the Holy Ghost, the third Person in the Godhead is set forth. He is God even as God the Father and God the Son. The oneness of God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit is declared. The specific work of the Holy Spirit is set forth as the administration within the church for the edifying and gifting of the saints and for the preaching and glorifying of Christ Jesus the Lord. In sovereign power, the Holy Spirit works within each saint, and the Holy Spirit acts within the church, particularly giving unction to the ministers of the word. We are under his power, his appointment, his service and thus we take the action and speak the word which the Holy Spirit moves us to act and speak in the strength of his power.

**I Corinthians 12: 7: But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. 8: For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; 9: To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; 10: To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another *divers* kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: 11: But all these, worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit (all these are worked by that one and the same Spirit) dividing to every man severally as he will.**

**Illustration: Friend in college who was seeking a church that preached the Holy Spirit.**

But the Holy Spirit is sent of God the Father to guide sinners into the truth concerning the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. God the Father and God the Holy Spirit are one in having God the Son, Christ our Lord exalted in the hearts of redeemed sinners.

**John 14: 13: Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. 14: He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew *it* unto you. 15: All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew *it* unto you.**

## II. THE WORK PERFORMED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

**Acts 13: 1: Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.**

How did these men get to the church at Antioch?

A. Those God chose from before the foundation of the world, are those whom Christ reconciled to God, made atonement for, purged of all their sin. We know that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to enter in and effectually, irresistibly quicken the sinner to spiritual life so that chosen sinner's are brought to repentance toward God and faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**John 3: 5: Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and *of* the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6: That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7: Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. 8: The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.**

B. So it is also by the same effectual working of the Holy Spirit that Christ sends forth his messengers, pastors after his own heart. It is by the working of the Holy Spirit that Christ's messengers are raised in his church and come forth with one message. The message of Christ Jesus and him crucified.

1. Before any messenger can preach the total depravity of sinners, he must first know that he fits the bill himself of being totally depraved in trespasses and in sins.

Before any messenger can preach the sovereign grace of God he must first be made to know his own sin so that he knows fully that God's choice of his elect is in no way respective of any good or evil in the sinner.

Before any messenger can declare the sovereign, irresistible power of God's grace he must first experience the power of the Holy Spirit in the heart, that power which converted him from the falsehood he once called truth to the truth that God converts in righteousness, not unjust balances; in judgment, and not in this way that seemeth right unto sinful men.

A man how has been taught by the Holy Spirit can no longer blaspheme the Holy Ghost--as Gill says, He can no longer purposely **oppose, contradict, and deny the operations wrought, the doctrines revealed** by the Holy which is to **lessen the glory of God, and gratify fleshly lusts: such was the sin of the Scribes and Pharisees.**

2. So of these men in the church at Antioch...concerning Saul, we in saw in Acts how the Holy Ghost worked irresistibly within him. Christ our Lord arrested him, called him out of his vain religion, blinded him from what he thought religion looked like so that he could see Christ the Lord. After standing with the Pharisee's for years, for the first time in his life, the Lord said of him, "Behold, he prayeth."

The Holy Ghost worked irresistibly in him and produced effectual obedience that only God produces: **Acts 9: 20: And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God, the very Christ.** Paul said, "**When the commandment came, sin revived, and I--and all my so-called righteousnesses--died.**" The Holy Spirit caused Paul to say, I count those things **but dung that I might win Christ and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.**"

3. The same is said concerning Barnabas, we have seen in the book of Acts that his obedience was credited to the work of the Holy Ghost within him: **Acts 11:24: For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith:**

4. Concerning these other men at Antioch we saw that upon the persecution of Stephen the Holy Ghost brought men as far as Antioch doing one thing: **Acts 11: 20: And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus.**

C. So it was by the irresistible power and work of the Holy Spirit that the church in Antioch was well-provided for. That is what we are told here in:

**Acts 13: 1: Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers;**

1. "Excellent interpreters of scripture." Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain excellent interpreters of scripture, men with spiritual discernment, able to teach, men such as...**Acts 12: 1:...Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.**

2. **Manaen which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch**--was a man raised in the same house or by the same mother as Herod--this declares to us that these were men who had forsaken all this world had to offer for Christ and for his church.

The point here is this: Though God the Father, though the Son of God, though the Holy Spirit is now calling two men to go to another place, he had well-provided the church at Antioch with men who had experienced the power of God's grace through the Holy Spirit, taught by the Spirit in truth and in spirit and enabled to preach the word in truth. The church at Antioch would not be left without.

The triune God of glory does nothing by half-measures, leaving sinners to provide for themselves in some aspect by themselves, but our God who is just and merciful toward his elect in the person of his Son, does by his Holy Spirit provide fully for his people.

C. Next, notice three things: the power of the Holy Spirit in making known who he will use for a specific work, his power to give his saints a heart of unity concerning his workers and his power to send them to the work whereunto he has called them.

**Acts 13: 2: As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. 3: And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid *their* hands on them, they sent *them* away.**

**A. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted...**

We should not limit this to a specific hour. There is no doubt that at a specific point in time the Holy Spirit put it into the hearts of all concerned that Barnabas and Saul were called to carry the gospel to the Gentiles.

But this also means, as they gave themselves to the work which they had been entrusted with up to this point. **As they ministered unto the Lord, and fasted**--includes the work of a faithful teacher of the gospel; Christ's servants **minister unto the Lord**--those that instruct Christ's people serve Christ by preaching the gospel of Christ and by praying to the Lord for the Lord's people--both are included here in this phrase, "*ministered unto the Lord.*"

And **Fasted**--they separated themselves from the world, humbled themselves and denied themselves, learned to endure hardness, even denying themselves their necessary bread at times, that they might give themselves to the responsibility given them.

2. Over time, the Holy Spirit worked in Barnabas and Saul and proved, before the others in the church at Antioch, that these were two men whom the Lord had chosen, filled, made faithful and who were proven faithful...In the beginning, Barnabas was faithful to do what the Lord enabled him to do right where they Lord had placed him: **Acts 4: 37: Having land, sold *it*, and brought the money, and laid *it* at the apostles' feet.**

Later, the Holy Spirit put in the hearts of the saints at Jerusalem to send Barnabas to Antioch who went faithfully. The Lord used Barnabas to bring Saul to Antioch. When the saints

determined to send relief to the church at Jerusalem during the famine, the Holy Spirit put in their hearts to send their gift by the hand of these the two men. They did so faithfully.

Over a period of time--they ministered faithfully unto the Lord, and separated themselves from all worldly distraction to the work given them by the Holy Spirit. Then, after Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, as they continued together at Antioch with the other ministers and saints, in worship, in fasting from the cares of this world, the Holy Spirit speaks to the heart of these ministers and the saints at Antioch saying,

**Acts 13: 2: Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.**

B. This was the work of the Holy Spirit in knitting their hearts for one common cause.

1. This word seems to be the Holy Spirit's word directed to these faithful ministers and to the believer's in the church at Antioch. We are not told specifically if the Holy Spirit spoke this audibly, but we know that he spoke this in their hearts.

He had raised up Barnabas and Saul as his chosen men, he had made it clear that they were set for the gospel of Christ, separated from the world and now he makes known that these two men will carry the gospel to the Gentiles and everyone gladly acknowledged that the Spirit had called these men to carry the gospel to the Gentiles.

C. Now notice, the order and obedience which the Holy Spirit worked in these ministers and in the brethren at Antioch.

**Acts 13: 3: And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid *their* hands on them, they sent *them* away.**

**1. They fasted and prayed**--these ministers and brethren at Antioch set themselves apart and took time to pray to the Lord concerning this.

- This was a time when the Spirit had laid it upon their hearts that two of the pillars in their church would be leaving to go to the Gentiles; this was a time, like all others, when they especially cast all their care upon their Savior in prayer, both for God's will in directing them in this matter, for the Lord to continue providing for the church at Antioch and for God's grace upon these two faithful men.

2, And when they had fasted and prayed, **they laid hands on them**...this has more significance than just a ceremony...this was a faithful, prayerful, submissive, acknowledging of the work of the Holy Spirit that these were indeed the men to be sent.

**3. So they sent them away...Acts 14:26: And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled.**

**Illustration:** Some times the Lord makes his will known to the people before he makes it known to his ministers.

**Example:** My friend in Oregon...invited to preach...he went up...they asked him to come be their pastor...but he told them he would come up for a time and see how things went...over a period of a year or two, he said, "I believe the Lord has revealed to me that I am your pastor." They replied, "We've known it for some time, we were just waiting for the Lord to make it known to you."

**Illustration:** The plum line. The plum line lays a straight line down. Everything that passes over that straight line is cut off and brought in line with the plum line.

The Holy Spirit makes Christ the plum Line.

- He brings his ministers and his saints in line with him.
- He makes us willing to cut off everything and everyone that does not give all the glory to Christ alone--even if it is our closet relations.
- When God makes his will known in the hearts of his people, through his Spirit, he also creates within them a willingness.
- Thus he brings us in line with his will of glorying his only begotten Son.
- The Holy Spirit alone creates this unity and willingness in the hearts of his people.

That is not how it ought to be, that is how it is in the place where the Holy Spirit has exalted Christ in the hearts of his people.

**Application:** By God's grace, by the Holy Spirit working in each of us here, may all things be brought to the Touchstone and in line with that which abases man and glorifies Christ Jesus our Lord.

**A. The message:** It was evident to the saints at Antioch, that Paul and Barnabas had one message. They preached the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus.

1. Ruined by the fall--They declared that no man shall be justified or sanctified by the will of man--Paul said to the Galatians, "Having begun in the Spirit are ye now made perfect by the flesh."

2. Redeemed by Christ's blood--**Romans 5: 10...when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.**

3. Regenerated by the Holy Spirit--Paul did not mince words concerning the necessity of this work, and that this is the work of God the Spirit, who creates a new heart, who makes a sinner willing-- **1Corinthians 12:3: Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.**

All we have to do to take the offense out of the cross is to word things in such an excellent way that we leave sinner's with the impression that they can do something to save themselves, this is the wisdom of men--**I Corinthians 2: 1: And I, brethren, when I came**



to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. 2: For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. 3: And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. 4: And my speech and my preaching *was* not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: 5: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

B. The motive: 2 Corinthians 5: 12: For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to *answer* them which glory in appearance, and not in heart. 13: For whether we be beside ourselves, *it is* to God: or whether we be sober, *it is* for your cause. 14: For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: 15: And *that* he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. The church at Antioch were persuaded by the Holy Spirit that the motive of these two men was the love of God in Christ; by God's grace that was the motive of the church at Antioch. The man who is constrained by the love of God in the heart, does not glory in appearance but in the heart--he knows he was dead and Christ bought him through death and thus the love of Christ constrains him to do all to the glory of Christ his Lord.

C. The method: Some think the more folks they can constrain to be baptized the more folks will see their numbers and follow, so they are always coercing men to be baptized, Paul said, 1Corinthians 1:17: For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. Pharisees are engaged in a religion of flesh--it is all carnal--therefore the methods are those which are impressive to the carnal eye. Paul said, 2Corinthians 4:2: But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. What did they do when they got to Cyprus? Just one thing: Acts 13: 5: And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogue of the Jews. Later we will see that Paul, filled with the Holy Ghost, did a mighty act to an enemy of the gospel. The deputy Sergius Paulus saw it and believed but scriptures says the thing which astonished the deputy was this: V12:...being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord. This is an astonishing doctrine, so our methods are very simply set on the preaching of this astonishing doctrine.

D. The music: Paul and Barnabas were as consistent in abasing man and glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ in song as they were in the gospel they preached. Paul said, Ephesians 5:19: Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord. Colossians 3:16: Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

If the **message** sounded an unclear note, the church at Antioch would have known these are not the men. If the **methods** of these men were the will of the flesh they could have never been sent forth. Even if the **music** they delighted in was contrary to the gospel they preached they would have raised a giant question mark in the minds of the Lord's people. If these were out of line, it would have been reason enough to know that the **motive** of Barnabas and Saul was the love of this world. But their motives were pure, so their message, their methods and the music they loved.

And who receives the glory for this work...

**Acts 13: 4: So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.** This is the work for which the Father and Son sent forth the Holy Spirit, this is the work he performs. This was the day in which the Lord began bringing the gospel to Gentiles like you and I who sit here tonight.

- Aren't you thankful?
- Doesn't this make you want to wait on the Lord? The Spirit of God dwells in his messengers and in his saints. We can wait with assurance.
- Try the spirits? By simply listening, the still small voice of the Holy Spirit will make his will abundantly clear.
- Aren't you thankful that he joins the hearts of his people in unity concerning such matters?
- What a blessing that he sent forth the Holy Spirit who works in our midst.

As we will see next time, when the Spirit of God sends forth his messengers, we can expect great results and not even the gates of hell can prevail against us.

May God be pleased to work such grace in our midst. Amen.