

The Church's Greatest Need

Call to Worship: Psalm 16

1st Scripture: John3:22-36

2nd Scripture: Luke 11:5-13

Introduction

In our first Scripture reading, we were told something very interesting and profound about the Lord Jesus Christ. We were told that, as a man, He was given the full measure of the Holy Spirit, at all times. And the implication of this, is that, Jesus was the most *dependent* human being to ever walk the face of the earth. Every miracle that He worked and every Word of God that He proclaimed, was done under the power and influence of the Holy Spirit. In fact, that is why the religious leaders were said to have blasphemed the Holy Spirit, when they attributed the miracles of Christ to the working of Satan. For, the miracles that Christ worked, were worked in and by the power of the Holy Spirit, and they were the most profound and evident testimony of the Messianic authority that belonged to Christ. To attribute such evident signs of God's stamp of authenticity upon the Person and work of Christ, to Satan, is to shun the final and most powerful testimony of the gospel. It is to shut the door on that most necessary means of grace, namely, the power of the Holy Spirit, whose role it is, to apply the saving benefits of salvation, to as many as God effectually calls.

But furthermore, upon recognizing that Christ uniquely contained the full measure of the Holy Spirit, at all times, brings with it, another significant implication, which is assumed in our main text. And that is to say that, although the Holy Spirit indwells the people of God, His power in them, to empower their ministerial efforts and to excite them unto God's service, may vary or fluctuate at various times. In other words, we do not contain the full measure of the Holy Spirit; we do not operate under the full measure of the Spirit's influence and power, at all times. In fact, we can grieve the Holy Spirit with our sins, and we can quench the Spirit, by our failure to strive to utilize and exercise the gifts that He has deposited within us, for the edification of Christ's church. We can fall short in being "led by the Spirit," in making use of the Spirit's aid in

seeking to put the sinful deeds of the body to death, in subjecting ourselves to the influence of alcohol or drugs, rather than subjecting ourselves to the influence of the Spirit...etc.

And so, all of this to say that, the Spirit's influence in the believer's life, and the Spirit's use of believers for effective ministry, and the Spirit's empowerment unto the prosperity of the church, can vary, at different points in the history of the church. Indeed, we use such terms as "spiritual awakening," to define blessed times when the Spirit comes upon the church with great power, and brings about a profound unity and commitment to sacrificial service, unto the great prosperity of the church. Early on in the Book of Acts, and during other noted periods in history, such awakenings have been witnessed...and they are profound! We also speak of "revival," where the Holy Spirit works to bring large scores of souls into the kingdom, at single events, where He anoints the minister and the gospel with exceptional power. Finally, in the Book of Acts, we also find times where an individual was preaching, and we are told that he was "full of the Holy Spirit" when he spoke...etc.

All of this to say, brethren, that the manifestation of the Holy Spirit's presence and power upon a ministry or a local church or a people, can vary. And when He is active in manifesting His power, the kingdom of God comes with great power, His people are further sanctified and empowered unto effective ministry, Christ is made known, and lost, dying souls are brought to life in Christ.

With all of this said, let us then spend a short time looking at the text that is in front of us.

I. Keep Praying

Our main text lies in a broader context, where our Lord Jesus Christ is addressing the essential matter of prayer.

1) In verses 1-4, he teaches them how to pray, by providing them with that model prayer, the famous "Our Father" prayer, as a guide, not simply to be parroted in a machine like fashion, but rather, as a template, exemplifying the way in which we ought to pray. And it is here that we find a general sense of the quality and the content of the prayers, which we ought to offer up to God.

2) And then, in verses 5-8, our Lord uses a parabolic illustration to compel us to pray with persistence, being confident that God hears and will answer our prayers. And He uses the illustration then, of a friend, who will eventually get up out of bed to give bread to his other friend, who is knocking at the door, even though it is midnight, simply because the friend persists in knocking. And the lesson there, is that, if your friend, who at that time even, when he doesn't want to be disturbed, responds, because of your persistence, how much more will God, who is never inconvenienced and who never sleeps, respond to the persistent prayers of His children, whom He bids to come and seek Him in prayer.

3) And then, finally, in verses 9-13, our Lord exhorts us then to keep praying; to keep asking, seeking and knocking, recognizing that God actually delights in answering our prayers and in doing what is good and best for us. To convince us of this, he gives us a precious illustration that we can all relate to, namely, of how a father responds to his needy child. And so, the gist of it goes like this, "When a hungry, helpless child asks his father for something to eat; when he asks for bread, a fish or an egg to satisfy his hunger, what father would respond by seeking to make his needy child gravely ill, by tricking him and giving him a stone or a serpent or a scorpion instead?" No, the father, of course, has his son's best interests in mind, and would do all to promote the good and well being of his son, delighting in providing for him and doing him good, especially as he knows that his young child is dependent upon him, trusting that his father has his best interests at heart.

And so, the Lord concludes, by stating, "How much more does your Heavenly Father desire to do you good and to answer your requests, when He, even unlike your earthly father (who cares for you, so deeply), is wholly righteous and without the contamination of sin and evil within Him?" And so, the obvious implication here is, "Ask! Seek! Knock! And keep doing so, knowing that beyond the shadow of any doubt, your God and Father has your best interests at heart, and delights to hear and answer your prayers. Keep praying!

II. The Church's Greatest Need

Having this all in the background, Brethren, and keeping in mind all that I have said in the introduction, let me now drive this home to our ultimate conclusion here, this afternoon.

Our Lord ends this section with an interesting statement, which ought to get us thinking real hard. Notice in verse 13, He states, "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!"

Out of all the things that God would delight in giving us, why does Jesus here emphasize the fact, that the Father is more than willing to give *the Holy Spirit* to those who ask? Well, simply put, because the best and most needful thing that God could give us, is His Holy Spirit, brethren! There is no greater blessing or gift in the visible or invisible realms, that God can give to His children, than the gift of the Holy Spirit, whom we've seen already, was given to Christ without measure, and whose power is proportioned out by God, to all of His people.

Brethren, let me state it this way: You and I, as individuals, and collectively as a church, have no greater constant need, than the presence, blessing and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Every aspect of our Christian walk; every benefit that we are to receive from the Word of God, every ability to overcome sin, every positive motion in the progress of our sanctification, every effectual influence brought about by our testimony (in word and in deed), every hope of the success of the gospel through our lips and lives; in short, everything and anything profitable that we can ever do or achieve, as individuals and as a church, depends upon the anointing and blessing and empowering of the Holy Spirit. Where the Spirit is present, there is life and hope and prosperity. Where the Spirit is absent, there is death and hopelessness and regression. The landscape of our walk with Christ is either arid, dry and lifeless or green, lush and prosperous, all dependent upon the Spirit's presence with us.

Brethren, the church's greatest need is the Holy Spirit! The Spirit brings awakening and the Spirit brings revival! And the good news here then, Brethren, is that the Lord tells us that the Father is not stingy with the Holy Spirit! No, rather, even as an earthly father, who although sinful and evil, so cares for his child and seeks to nourish him, our Heavenly Father, without any vices, all the more delights in giving His Holy Spirit to those who ask!

All of that said, brethren, here is my proposal, this morning. And I am speaking now to those of you who desire to see God bless the labors of this church, with His abundant empowerment and blessing, such that we might see great things happen in our church...to us, to

our families and our children, to our local community...let's think big even...to the world at large! I am speaking to those of you, who are tired of lingering in the realm of the status quo, and who desire to see God work a great work, right here and now, in our own day!

Here's the challenge! I'm asking every single one of you, right here, to pray, every single day, for God to grant us, as individuals, and as a church, His Spirit! If you want to see God work in you; if you want to grow in grace and in Christ's likeness; if you want to see this church advance against and into the gates of hell; if you desire to see missionaries sent from this local body; if you desire to see an awakening in our midst, and a revival amongst the unsaved within the sphere of our influence, then pray with me, fervently, this week, every day, and into every other week and day, that God would grant us His Holy Spirit! Let us persistently pound upon heaven's door, being confident that this is the will and desire of our God, in keeping with His Word. And let us pray without doubting, believing that He will answer!

Amen!!!