

The Holy Spirit 2017 Part 5

This is the fifth message in our series on the person and work of the Holy Spirit. I hope this has been helpful to you and your understanding of who the Holy Spirit is and what he desires to do in your life. The last two Sundays we talked about symbols used in the bible to help us understand the Holy Spirit. Today I want to take a different look at the work of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said in John 14, **“I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans.” John 14:16-18.** The word Counselor, in KJV is translated as Comforter. I like that translation better. “but the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit...” The Greek word translated as Counselor or Comforter is *Paraclete* and has the literal meaning of “to call beside”. The *Paraclete* is one called alongside to help. That’s an excellent description of the Holy Spirit and what he has come to do. His very presence, knowing he is with us, comforts us. Jesus said I won’t leave you as orphans. I’ll send the Holy Spirit and he will be alongside you and dwell within you. You won’t be alone. That is comforting.

In John 14 and John 16 Jesus tells us the Holy Spirit will comfort us, abide with us, guide us into all truth, dwell in us, teach us, testify of Jesus, bring glory and honor to Jesus, convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment, remind us of the teachings of Jesus and show us things to come. The Holy Spirit is the abiding, living right-now-with-us Presence of God. He is revealing to us and leading us in God’s plan for our lives and this has been God’s plan from the beginning. I want you to see something of the continuity of God’s purpose in the Scripture and how the Holy Spirit has been at work.

Last year we spent the year talking about the grand story of redemption that ran through the entire Bible. I want to try to show you something of the story of God’s Holy Spirit at work. We’ve mentioned before the Holy Spirit’s involvement in creation, his work prior to our salvation, his work on a daily basis, making us conformable to Christ and producing the fruit of the Spirit in us, sanctifying us and renewing us. Let me show you something else.

Paul writes to the Corinthian church, **“Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you?” 1 Corinthians 3:16** Three chapters later he writes, **“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price.**

Therefore honor God with your body.” 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. It is God’s intent, as Jesus made clear in John 14, that the Holy Spirit dwell with us, and Paul calls us, interestingly enough, the temple of God. We will see the significance of that in a moment, but it has always been God’s intent that His Spirit dwell with and within his people. Go with me back to the Old Testament book of Exodus.

After 400 years of slavery in Egypt, God miraculously led his people out of Egypt and into the land he had promised by covenant to Abraham and his descendants forever. Moses led the people at God’s command to Mt. Sinai in the wilderness, the place the people came to know as the Mountain of God’s presence (Ex.19). God explains to Moses he will cause his holy presence to come over the mountain like a dense cloud and he will speak with Moses. This cloud is another symbol or image of the presence of the Holy Spirit. (Isaiah wrote, “Where is he who set his Holy Spirit among them, who sent his glorious arm of power to be at Moses right hand...” Isaiah 63:12) God told Moses to tell the people, **“If you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” Exodus 19:5** God intends that he would have a people, a treasured possession, and God’s presence, his Spirit among them, would be what sets them apart from everyone else.

God tells Moses he intends to dwell among his people and they are to build a tabernacle, a movable temple as a sign and place of his dwelling. **“Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them.” Exodus 25:8** How incredible. He would “tabernacle” (dwell) among them. He gives them the Book of the Covenant in Ex. 20-24 with details for worship, the festivals, the commandments, laws for how to live and treat others. Then in Ex. 25-31 God gives Moses precise instructions, measurements and design for the tabernacle where his presence would dwell, where he would meet with them and where he would show them mercy. All of this explanation as well as the appointment of priests and the consecration of the priests, all of this detail is given to Moses in the law so they will now how to live with God’s Holy Spirit - His presence among them.

Then comes the failure in Ex. 32. While Moses is on Mt. Sinai receiving the law and instructions from God, the people sin and build a golden calf to worship as their god. They wanted a god they could see. Perhaps a god they could understand or control. In response to their rebellion and idolatry God tells Moses, “You go ahead and take the people to the promised

land, but I won't go with you. I will send an angel to go with you, but my presence won't go with you because these people are so stubborn and rebellious and I might destroy them if I go.

(Exodus 33:3)

Moses recognizes this isn't going to work. He won't go if God's presence isn't going. (Exodus 33:7-14 gives us some marvelous background on how God has been speaking to Moses. In what was called the Tent of Meeting, Moses would walk in and the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance while the Lord spoke with Moses, like we would talk face to face in a sense. The presence of God was manifested in a physical, tangible way that the people could see over the tent.) So Moses has this conversation with God and tells him **“If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?” Exodus 33:15-16**

Here it is again: God's presence, His Holy Spirit is what distinguishes them from all the other people on the earth. Think of what Moses is saying. Not the law, not circumcision, not the rituals and festivals – all these are outward signs of the covenant – but it was God's Presence, the presence of the Holy Spirit that made the difference.

It's the same with us. It is not our name, our ethical values, our standards of holiness, our allegiance to the bible that really distinguishes us from everyone else. At the heart of it, it's the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit living in us. It is the life transforming power of the Holy Spirit at work in us that makes us different from the rest of the world. At least it's supposed to be! If we don't have the Holy Spirit, we are just another weird group that meets for fellowship. If we don't have his presence living in us, working in and through us, leading and guiding us into truth, testifying and pointing to Jesus, sanctifying, empowering and enabling us, we won't make it. We won't be any different than the rest of the world. God don't send us out into this world unless the empowering Presence of your Holy Spirit is with us!

God agrees with Moses and says “My Presence will go with you.” In the next chapter, Exodus 34, God reveals his name and nature and glory to Moses followed by their actual construction of the tabernacle in the wilderness. In Exodus 40 the bible says when they completed the tabernacle, **“the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.” Exodus 40:35** God's glory filled the tabernacle. The Presence of God dwelt among them in the camp. It's worthy of note that the bible tells us **“In all the travels of the Israelites, whenever the cloud lifted from**

above the tabernacle, they would set out; but if the cloud did not lift, they did not set out – until the day it lifted. So the cloud of the Lord was over the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel during all their travels.” Exodus 40:36-38. If the Spirit of God was moving, they moved. If he didn't move, they didn't move. A people led by the Spirit of God. That's what God wanted then and He still wants now. God help us to be obedient and sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit!

Eventually they settled in the land of Israel and God raised up a king, David, whose son, Solomon, built a permanent dwelling place for the ark of the covenant and for the name of the Lord. Once again, like the wilderness tabernacle, when the temple was completed the glory of God, the presence of God's Holy Spirit filled the temple so much so that the priests were unable to minister because of the cloud of God's presence **“When the priests withdrew from the Holy Place, the cloud filled the temple of the Lord. And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled his temple.” 1 Kings 8:10-11.**

Over time, once again God's people sinned and grieved the Holy Spirit. Their sin caused them to forfeit God's presence. They chose their own pleasure and comfort and flesh over the life giving presence of God's Holy Spirit. As a result, the temple in Jerusalem, the place where God had chosen to dwell, the place where he set his name, his presence, his glory as a witness to the nations of the earth, that temple is destroyed. God's people were captured, killed, exiled and sadly they were no longer the people distinguished by the presence of the living God.

We talked about Ezekiel's vision two Sundays ago. The promise was that a day would come when God would raise up his people from exile and bring them back. More than that, he would breathe life into them again and his Spirit would dwell within them. He would write his law upon their hearts and not just on tablets of stone and they would be his people once again.

God's plan all along was that His presence would be with his people. Not just with the nation of Israel, but with all those who would serve him and live for him. This is where we come into the picture. His Holy Spirit would be with us, not just dwelling in a temple made with hands, not simply a pillar of smoke or a cloud of God's glory seen by his people, but because Christ brought salvation to all who repent and believe, then individually as redeemed by his grace and collectively as the redeemed body of Christ the church, his Holy Spirit dwells with us! Glory to God! His Holy Presence, His Holy Spirit dwells in us!

Hear Paul's words again. **“Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?” 1 Corinthians 3:16.** Don't you know if you have repented of your sins and received Christ as Savior and Lord of your life, the Holy Spirit dwells in you? God's own Presence that led Israel through the wilderness, that filled the tabernacle and Solomon's temple, that same abiding Presence dwells in us. This is what distinguishes us from every other people on the face of the earth. At least it is supposed to. And, like Israel, God's Spirit dwelling in us obligates us to live like it. We are to live as the Holy people of God because His Holy Presence dwells in us! **“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.” 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.** We have a responsibility to live holy lives because the Holy Spirit lives in us. We are his temple.

This is no small thing. The same Spirit that filled the temple with God's glory and that led the children of Israel in the wilderness, that Spirit lives in us as the redeemed people of God. We must live holy and obedient lives because we are now the temple of the Holy Spirit! Paul was concerned about the actions and behavior of the church in Corinth because they were grieving the Holy Spirit. We don't want our actions to banish the Holy Spirit from the temple of God the way Israel's actions did in the time of Solomon's temple. We must not let it happen.

There is no longer a tabernacle or a temple. Through the saving grace of God through Christ, when we received Jesus as Savior and Lord, we became the temple of the Holy Spirit. He dwells in us. He tabernacles among us by his Holy Spirit. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Look what he is providing for us now by the presence of the Holy Spirit: This is how we know God's love for us in Christ Jesus, because he poured out his love for us by the Holy Spirit. **“God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom he has given us.” Romans 5:5** We know he loves us by the presence of the Holy Spirit in us!

This is how we know we are God's very own children, because of the Holy Spirit's presence in us. **“Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba, Father.’ So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.” Galatians 4:6-7**

This is why holiness is not optional for us, because His Holy Spirit dwells in us. **“For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this**

instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.” 1 Thessalonians 4:7-8

We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God Himself. This has been his plan all along. The Holy Spirit is the fulfillment of God’s promise to dwell in and among and with His people. The Holy Spirit is God present among us and this affects everything about us and our choices in life! It is His Spirit, His presence with us, this is how we live, how we conquer, how we overcome. This is the fulfillment of God’s plan for his people from the beginning and we are being allowed the privilege of experiencing it today. This is God’s plan for his people, his church, that he abides in us by His Holy Spirit. We are his temple!

Gordon Fee, in his book *God’s Empowering Presence* wrote, “We are not left on our own as far as our relationship with God is concerned: neither are we left on our own to slug it out in the trenches as it were, with regard to the Christian life. Life in the present is empowered by the God who dwells among us and in us. As the personal presence of God, the Spirit is not merely some ‘force’ or ‘influence’. The living God is a God of power and by the Spirit the power of the living God is present with us and for us.” ...Gordon Fee

The Holy Spirit, the Comforter is with us. It’s been God’s plan all along that he would dwell among his people, that he would have a Spirit-filled, Spirit-led people and we are living in the fulfillment of God’s plan! Let’s dedicate ourselves to living as the people he intends us to be, holy, set apart to God and filled with his Spirit. You’ve been wondering if you can make it, if you can succeed and overcome as a Christian. God’s empowering presence, the Holy Spirit is with you. Don’t turn away from him. Don’t grieve him. Trust him. Rely upon him. Ask for his assistance. He is with you and he isn’t going to leave you alone or defenseless. God has given us His Holy Spirit and by His empowering presence we will conquer, we will be victorious, we will overcome! It’s God’s plan for you, for all of us.

Who needs the help of the Holy Spirit today? Join me and let’s pray. Let’s ask for his abiding presence and his power to help us!