**Who Needs Theology?**

**Lesson #13**

**The Person of the Holy Spirit**

-The Bible describes the Holy Spirit with attributes that belong to God alone: omniscience (Isa. 40:13; 1 cor. 2:10-12), omnipresence (Ps. 139:7-10), omnipotence (Job 33:4; Ps. 104:30; Rom. 15:18-19), eternality (Heb. 9:14).

-The Holy Spirit is also addressed as a person. (John 16).

-The qualities attributed to the Holy Spirit are teaching, comforting, guiding (Rom. 8:14), giving, calling (Acts 13:2), convicting (John 16:8), sending, interceding (Rom. 8:26), commissioning (Acts 20:28).

-The Spirit can be resisted (Acts 7:51) or responsively answered (Acts 10:19-21).

**The Work of the Holy Spirit**

-The Bible begins with the work of the Holy Spirit created, *through the spoken word.*

-All ongoing life is continually sustained by the Holy Spirit.

-By the Holy Spirit the enormous diversity of creation is brought into a single meaningful whole.

-Merely to be alive is to be endowed with life by the Spirit of God.

-The withdrawal of the Spirit is death.

-There is no work or thought or achievement of humanity that can be called good, true, or beautiful that is not premised by the Spirit’s gift. (Jer. 31:35; Ps. 136:25; 2 Cor. 3:3-11; John 3:34).

-The Holy Spirit guides human insight in literature, the arts, the sciences, philosophy, poetry, and political life.

-The HS was present in preparing all humanity for God’s own coming in the Son.

-The Spirit is always at work where new life in Christ is developing, the truth of Christ is being proclaimed, and the community of faith is growing.

-Vitality, authority, and community are continuing evidence of the work of the HS.

-The HS as *the Counselor* – (literal meaning of *parakaleo* means call to one’s aid).

-*Parakletos* (Counselor) is one called to another’s side to take his or her part, as a friend, a counselor, as one leading aid, and partaking in another’s cause.

**The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Unbeliever**

-The HS works to convict unbelievers of their sin and need for Christ. (John 16:5-16).

-Through directly touching, meeting, and indwelling within the human spirit, the Holy Spirit gives new life to the sinner, sustains life through the hazards of moral bankruptcy, and works to draw human freedom back to its original purpose of reflecting the goodness of God.

-The Spirit works to enable the faithful to hear and respond to Christ’s living personal presence.

**The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Believer**

-As faith is the only prerequisite for receiving Christ, so that faith (yielding, obedience, complete submission, entire consecration) can only come about by a work of the Holy Spirit.

-God not only forgives our sin through Jesus Christ, but through the Holy Spirit works to overturn the power of our sin in actual daily interpersonal behaviour.

-The gospel both announces the forgiveness of sin in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, but also calls us to live free from sin by the power of the Spirit.

-The Spirit is given as a seal or stamp that God places upon his people, a pledge of what is to come in the final consummation. (Eph. 1).

-The Spirit reproves and challenges the faithful to accountability to God.

“There is nothing too subtle or dense for the Spirit to penetrate or too sinful for the Spirit to cleanse or too weary for the Spirit to refresh or too dark for the Spirit to understand or too dead for the Spirit to breathe life into again.” (Thomas Oden).

**The Holy Spirit and Scripture**

-Scripture must continue to be our guide over our vulnerable and subjective experiences.

-Every person’s experience is prone to self-deception and interest-laden distortions and this shows itself particularly with the subject of the Holy Spirit.

-No doctrine is more prone to fanaticism and novelty and subjectivism than the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

-Just because we make strong appeals to personal experience does not guarantee that our feelings are biblically grounded or *from the Spirit*.

-The work of the Spirit deserves careful attention because it is so prone to subjective manipulation and ideological abuse.

-The Holy Spirit allows us to truly hear and be affected by scripture.

-Wherever scripture is preached attentively, it transforms human lives, affects human societies, changes political structures, and redeems human sinfulness.

-The Spirit’s main job is to testify of Jesus and empower the disciples to do that themselves. (The Spirit does not draw attention to himself but points to Jesus).

-The Holy Spirit assists the church in accurately remembering, rightly interpreting, and practically applying the scripture (John 14:26; 1 cor. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:5).

-This is why the clearest and surest expositions of the scriptures are to be found in the *community of faith* guided by the Spirit, not among individualist inquirers.

**The Holy Spirit; Fruits and Gifts**

-The evidence of the Holy Spirit living in someone is not their gifts, but their fruit.

\**Fruit of the Spirit* – Galatians 5:22.

\*See also Matthew 7:21-23.

-The surest proof of inclusion in the family is the evidence of discipline.

-Those undisciplined have not yet entered the family.

-Ironically, the presence of spiritual struggle is itself evidence of adoption.

-The walk of faith occurs in the world, but its guidance is not from the world.

-The Holy Spirit anoints and empowers those whom he calls to special service and gives them special gifts. (1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, Ephesians 4).

-Not all gifts are listed in the Bible (i.e. music, painting, and writing).

-These gifts are not given to individuals as such, but to individuals on behalf of the whole body, the community of faith.

-They are not for self-congratulations, but for building up the body.

“Drab uniformity is not the characteristic style of the work of the Spirit, but rather variability, imaginative responsiveness and exquisite diversity.” (Thomas Oden).

-The diversity of gifts does not mean that they are unequally valued by God, though they may function more urgently in a given moment.

-Fitness and order are proper duties of self-governance.

-In the reordering shaped by grace, sufficient room must be left for Christian liberty, freedom of conscience, and the gift of the Spirit.

**Christian Controversies and Diverse opinions about the Holy Spirit**

1. **The Filling of the Holy Spirit**

-Does one first believe and then later have the HS come and dwell in?

1. *Traditionalist*: The HS fully indwells the believer the moment they believe, although there will be ongoing growth (sanctification) and possible moments of heightened experiences with the HS.
2. *Renewalists*: All denominations in this stream fervently believe in an “infilling of the HS” (second blessing) for every Christian after their conversion to Christ. Many will link this with the ability to “speak in tongues”.

-(Mostly 1700s onward than the position of most Pentecostals and Charismatics 1900s onward).

*The Great Tradition* (traditionalist/historic church) position:

-In the act of believing the Spirit indwells.

-Just as birth occurs once, followed by continued living, growing, walking, so does being filled with the Holy Spirit.

-The Spirit empowers the Christian life with the ever-new daily life filling of the Spirit (Rom. 8:9-11).

-How this happens for each individual is unique.

-It is best not to impose one person’s experience normatively upon another, as if the Spirit works the same way in each individual.

-It is different in every individual, precisely because each person is an individual.

-The Spirit continues to dwell even among believers who backslide and fall.

-The Spirit is viewed in the NT as an ever-offered gift, not as a reward for having faith or good works.

-When resisted, the Spirit is grieved (Eph. 4:30).

-If we are led by the Spirit, we are not under the law (Gal. 5:18).

-The Spirit is a seal of Ownership confirming the Assurance of Salvation (Eph. 1).

-Adopted into a family.

1. **The Gifts of the Holy Spirit; Particularly Tongues**
2. *Renewalists:* Believe that all signs and wonders experienced in the books of Acts and the gifts of the HS happen today and should be sought and practiced. These signs and wonders (especially tongues) are evidence of the HS.
3. *Traditionalists:* Believe that the HS continues to work through signs, wonders and supernatural gifts today, but they are not the common experience of Christians. Signs and wonders *not necessarily* the evidence of the HS, but fruit (character development) is.
4. *Cessationists:* Believe the supernatural gifts of the HS were withdrawn by God when Scripture was completed at the end of the first century.

-The majority in the Global South today, (Africa, Asia, Latin America) believe in the continuing operation of the HS through miracles and supernatural gifts.

-In Africa, even Catholics and Anglicans take for granted that all the events described as part of the birth and infancy of the church in Acts happen today.

-Large majority would be *Renewalists* or, at the very least, *Traditionalists.* Almost none would be Cessastionists.

*The Great Tradition* (traditionalist/historic church) position:

-“Tongues” is a gift – not the sign of being filled with the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor. 12:27-31).

\*Note the difference between a historical book like Acts and doctrinal books like Paul’s letters.

-The gifts of the Spirit are to be tested primarily by the criterion of whether or not they further the mission of Christ, adhere to scripture and are discerned by the church. (1 Cor. 12:1-3).

-The gifts should be controlled in an orderly way in the church.

*-The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets* (1 Cor. 14:32).

*-For God is not a God of disorder but of peace.* (1 Cor. 14:33).

*-I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind* (1 Cor. 14:15)

**3. Filioque (and the Son)**

-The HS is the third person of God, eternally equal with Father and Son as to his deity, but how do they interact with each other?

-In the 4th century Augustine introduced the much debated *filioque* by explaining the HS as the love between the Father and the Son, and that this love is a person.

-Because the Father and Son are eternal, there never was a time they did not love each other, therefore the person (Spirit) of their love is also eternal.

-Therefore, the HS proceeds from both the love of the Father and the Son for each other.

-There is a mutual sending whereby Jesus sends the HS who is sent by the Father.

John 16:26 I (Jesus) will send you the Advocate—the Spirit of truth. He will come to you from the Father and will testify all about me.

-Thus the HS *proceeds* from the Father *and the Son.*

-*Filioque* means “and the Son” and is the word later added to the Nicene Creed by Catholics (and was later accepted by Protestants).

-The Orthdox (Eastern) church disagreed and upheld the original version of the Creed that states that the HS (like the Son) only proceeds from the Father.

-They disagreed with Augustine’s idea that saw the HS as the love between the Father and Son (who is a person).

-They saw the Son and Spirit like light and heat from the sun.

-The Father is the “fount of divinity,” the source of all deity.

-The Son and Spirit derive their deity from him eternally and are equal with him because they share his own nature.

-And because this is all eternal, there never was a time this was not.

-The Eastern church felt that the Western Church was misinterpreting John 16:26 by mixing up the *Immanent Trinity* with the *Economic Trinity.*

-The *Immanent Trinity* being the Trinity in eternity before and apart from creation.

-This is what the Creed should reflect and thus as it is about God’s *eternal nature* and the Spirit does not proceed from the Son *in eternity*.

-The *Economic Trinity* is how the Trinity functions in relation to the world, creation, and God’s people.

-That is what happened when Jesus *sent* the HS in history.

-All of this also had to do with church politics.

-The Eastern church believed that the church cannot change the Creed without the agreement of all the bishops.

-The Western church believed that it could be done simply by the bishop of Rome (the Pope).

-This controversy between the Eastern, Greek speaking Christians and Western, Latin speaking Christians eventually contributed to the Great Schism in 1054.

-All major Protestant churches sided with the Catholics on keeping “and the Son” in the Creed for theological reasons, not on the authority of the bishop of Rome.

These are perhaps the murkist, deepest waters of Christian theology, and most ordinary Christians stay out of them and even shake their heads in bemusement over such controversies. (Roger Olson)

**Development through the Creeds**

Nicene Creed (325)

We believe in the Holy Spirit.

Nicene/Constantinople (381)

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spoke by the Prophets.

Nicene/Constantinople addition (about 410)

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father *and the Son*, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spoke by the Prophets.

-To the day accepted by the Western church (and later Protestants) and rejected by the Eastern Church.

**Heretical Positions Regarding the Holy Spirit**

1. **Montanism**

-Named after Montanus (2nd century) for the belief that prophetic teachings can claim equal truth and authority with Scripture.

-The church claimed that Montanus (possibly, more so, his followers) placed himself and his prophetic teachings above scripture by encouraging his followers to consider his messages inspired and authoritative, even when they conflicted with what the bishops of the church were teaching according to scripture.

-Montanism has come to mean any group that believes its claims outside of Scripture are equal with Scripture.

Modern day example: Mormonism.

-Believe that God’s revelation through the HS inspired Scriptures continues.

-The Bible, the *Book of Mormon*, the *Doctrine and Covenants* and the *Pearl of Great Price.*

-However, the church leaves open the possibility of further scripture being written under the inspiration of the HS.

1. **Pneumatomachianism**

-Any denial of the deity of the HS, or a denial of the distinct personhood of the HS.

-Either the HS is a divine person, but not of the same substance of God (subordinationism).

-Or the belief that the HS is only a divine energy, force or power and not a person.

Modern day example: Jehovah Witnesses.

-Teach that the HS is a force, power or presence of God, but not a divine person of the Trinity.

**Questions**

1. What about the Holy Spirit do you find most confusing?
2. What about the Holy Spirit do you find most comforting?
3. Have you ever heard someone tell you “God told me….” How have you responded?
4. Do you think the gift of tongues is still for today? Why/Why not?
5. How do you discern when you are being led by the Holy Spirit and when it is just your own thoughts and desires?
6. What do you think is the most important takeaway from today’s talk?