

## The Holy Spirit & The Church 15<sup>th</sup> May 2016

'You also as living stones are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood to offer us spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.' 1 Peter 2 v 5

### Introduction

We talk in our Church a lot about being fully alive. That is right as it is our vision before God that all of us would walk into all He has for us. But to be fully alive we need the Holy Spirit-He is the change agent. However we can limit the power and effectiveness of the Holy Spirit in our lives and we then do not walk into the fully alive (John 10 v 10) experience He can bring us. I believe it grieves God's heart, it saddens Him deeply when we do things which limit His power in our lives. It does not only affect us but the whole body of Christ. We are the Church because of the power of the Holy Spirit- The Church began in a prayer meeting at Pentecost....

### Holy Spirit 101

- The relational nature of our God; Father, Son and Spirit
- Co-eternal, Co-equal, of one substance, loving, mutually submissive and servant hearted
- The Spirit of God a theme of the whole of scripture from creation onwards (Genesis 1 v 2)
- In the Old Testament the Spirit of God comes on people specifically in power for tasks or confirmation of His presence but He does not indwell
- Wherever He works there is a manifestation and effect; a consistent biblical theme -lives are changed, people fall over, prophesy, dance, speak in tongues etc.... Biblical examples include- When the temple was finished people fell on their faces; Moses, Elijah. Elisha were anointed in the power of the Holy Spirit. Effects of the Holy Spirit promised through Joel's prophecy; dreams, visions etc.. This has continued in the NT and throughout the Church history
- There is the promise of the Spirit one day on all flesh; the people of God in the Spirit, began at Pentecost (Joel 3)

### Pentecost

- Pentecost/Feast of Weeks-Jewish Festival; 50 days after Passover, the early gathering of crops, namely barley; seen as the first fruits (Leviticus 23 vs 15-22)
- The importance of the Jewish festivals as forerunners of what was to come, signposting the way to Jesus. What happened at Pentecost was the first 'harvest' gathering in of the people of faith. We need the OT to understand the new and in this context the Jewish festivals. I have concerns when people do not see and value this.
- Scripture is fully revealing about Jesus.
- The disciples had been given the Holy Spirit before Jesus went back to heaven, he breathed on them to receive it (John 20 v 22).
- Jesus is the giver and baptiser in the Holy Spirit, the fullness of this came at Pentecost (John 14 v 17/Acts 1 vs 5)
- Jesus acknowledged the Spirit's presence with them, promising He would be in them-John 14 v 17).
- Jesus said He would not leave us

### Being God's People

- Everything in the Old Testament points to Jesus; concealed and revealed
- Hosea (1 v 10 & 2 v 23) said that there would come a day when all people would have a relationship with God through faith, irrespective of race
- The hallmark of the people of God- we have been born again of His Spirit and now have the Holy Spirit living in us (John 3 v 3/John 1 vs 12-13)
- Paul reminds us, we are the temple of the Holy Spirit individually and corporately. If we do not have the Spirit of God in us we are not of God (Romans 8 v 9/1 Cor 6 v 19)

### Being a part

- Becoming a Christian means we have confessed the Lord Jesus that we believe He died and rose again and that we have been born of His Spirit (Romans 10 v 9). It is not a given-We each have to come to faith individually. Irrespective of what family we are in; being born in a Christian family does not guarantee salvation- it is a personal response. It is not an intellectual reasoning alone either it is

through faith and the faith we have has been given to us by the Holy Spirit anyway. It is about revelation of the Spirit of God in our lives, which has an effect. Someone I knew once who came to faith said to me before he finally became a Christian, 'I understand it here in my head but I do not know it in my heart.'

- Paul says we who are Christians have been made alive or quickened by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2 v 5)
- To become fully alive in Him means we are first and foremost born of God's Spirit, have Him living inside us and His Spirit is living His life through us every day (1 Cor 1 v 21)
- We have been incarnated by God Himself; He wants to make His home in us (John 14 v 17).

### **What the Spirit Gives us**

- He comforts and come along side-'paraclete'
- He strengthens and sustains
- He empowers and inspires us
- He loves and prays through us
- He gives us gifts
- He sheds His light in our hearts and reveals things (conviction)
- He teaches us
- Above all: HE REVEALS JESUS TO US

### **God's Holy House: 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty.'**

- Peter says we are living stones in His Household. Priests were the mediators or transmitters of God's presence; in the new Covenant we are His Priests (1 Peter 2 v 5/ Eph 2 vs 20-22/1 Cor 2 v 10-16).
- We do not come to Church, we are the Church (Acts 17 v 24)
- Wherever God's people gather- whether in a house, a field, a park or a building we are God's Holy Temple. This relates back to the Temple of the Old Testament where God's glory dwelt. Peter was talking to people exposed to temples of every kind.
- The Spirit of God desires to work through us all as we gather; what we have in our hearts as we gather can effect His flow through us all (1 Cor 11 v 18/Romans 12 v 5)
- We need to prepare our hearts for coming together
- Both individually and corporately we are His temple, housing His presence, the purpose of which is to flow out to our world
- We have been given as intercessors the vision of the fountain; God wants His Spirit to spill out into our lives and the community as it did on the day of Pentecost. But there are always things which block the flow.
- But both individually and corporately we can stop the flow of His Spirit in our lives and miss out on what He really wants to do with us and among us
- Our personal resentments, stresses before coming together, we pray for people on their way to gathering together, we carry in to each other what is on our hearts and this effects the Spirit wanting to work amongst us.
- Clogged downpipe? Water cannot flow
- Illustration-Pastor of a Church we attended in London encouraged us to prepare and get our hearts right before God and each other before we come to worship together. I wonder sometimes in our communion whether we might have prepared for this even before we come to meet?

### **Grieving the Spirit**

- Paul talks about the idea of both grieving and quenching the Spirit (Eph 4 v 30/ 1 Thess 5 v 19)
- Both put out, halt or restrict the Spirit of God in us individually and corporately.
- Quench- 'shennumi' Greek verb meaning to putting out the fire or things on fire. Can we put out each others fire too? Can we put others down in their enthusiasm?
- Grieve-'Lupeo- Greek verb (Eph 4 v 30); to cause pain or grief or distress OR in 1 Thess 5 v 19- to hinder Him from working in times when believers come together
- TO grieve or quench the Spirit is a failure to recognise or refuse to accept His leading and submit to His ways or replace the work of the Spirit in a counterfeit way; a form of religion.
- This can have the effect of stagnation, faith lacking and being 'fully dead'

- Sin, power, control, going our own way, doing Church and life without God's involvement stops the Spirit moving
- God grieves over His people when they do not have all He wants for us; another theme of the whole Bible
- There is a fear of allowing Him to move as we might lose some control. There is order in the Spirit but His order can be different to our own.
- BUT GOD grieves over us; He waits to be included. Over Israel-Hosea 11 v 8/ 13 vs 4-6/ 7 v 14/Jer 7 v 13; 18-22. TWO THINGS GOD SEEMS TO GRIEVE OVER FOR HIS PEOPLE in the OT as well as now:
  - 1) We do not listen
  - 2) We put other things before Him
  - 3) This results in restricting His flow in our lives and we bear the consequence by feeling dead inside. GOD MOURNS

### **What kind of Church are we?**

The Spirit says to the Churches in Revelation what hinders His work amongst them.

These Churches are the pictures for us of how the Church is in all generations and they represent aspects of most Churches (Rev. 2-3). The four main things Jesus had against the Churches were:

- A) SIN
- B) THE TRUTH OF GOD: Basic bible study tool- what is revealed as a whole in scripture as God's truth, we cannot pick and choose bits we do not like or that do not match our culture, our science, our philosophy, our psychology or personal view
- C) COMPLACENCY
- D) SELF-SUFFICIENCY
- E) This is true of the Church today- they reflect the state we are in

### **Why should any of this bother us?**

We can make decisions about our lives and our Churches which affect what kind of life we live before God and how effective we are in our mission

We have a world to reach- we ought to be bothering

If the Spirit of God is prevented from flowing through our lives in liberty and freedom we miss out on what God really desires

We thwart His love and He grieves over what might have been. Our sin and rebellion grieves Him. He grieves over the effect of these deadening things in our lives (His wrathful love).

We hold back from opening up to God and others, stifling His life in us

We are not just given the Holy Spirit for our own enjoyment- it is for a purpose as it was with the early Church, for power to reach their generation. The Holy Spirit comes to us today in the same way to help us reach our community.

### **Practicals**

***Be filled with the Holy Spirit***-Paul urges us to receive Him all the time (Ephesians 5v18)

***Surrender yourself*** to His desires and die to your own way (Matthew 16 v 24)

***Be real*** about the sin, lethargy and lack of passion you might have before God (1 John 1 v 9)

***Let go of controlling everything in your life;*** fear is behind lack of surrender to things (Isaiah 41 v 10)

***Control and power bases in the Church limit the move of the Spirit;*** hidden agendas halt God from working by His Spirit to change lives. I have been around Churches long enough to see control and manipulation that can go on in Church. This is usually demonstrated in two ways:

- 1) People being openly abused by Church leaders and/or 'well-meaning Christians saying hurtful things 'in love brother...'

- 2) Insidious/passive aggressiveness- where there is a fear of confronting, not being transparent to get our own way but use underhand and manipulative ways behind people's backs to force our own agendas.

Neither of these things have a place in God's Church. I have seen and know too many people who have been damaged by these methods. People can be scared to be part of a Church again and shy away from others. Sadly this leaves the Church bereft of people who could be used in His Church.

***Allow God's Spirit room in your life*** to set you free to be fully alive and be all what He wants you to be in HIM

### **The Change Agent**

The Holy Spirit is the change agent in us doing the work of regeneration (Titus 3 vs 4-7)

It is not by might (human effort) or by power (human control and dominance) but by HIS Spirit (Zechariah 4 v 6)

Are you as Amos said, 'At ease in Zion.' (Amos 6 v 1)). **'Woe to those who are at ease in Zion and those who feel secure in the mountains of Samaria (or MBC?)'**

Are you needing Him to renew you AGAIN by His spirit? Have you never had the experience of being born again by the Spirit of God? Jesus says today to come to HIM and receive.

Where His Spirit is there is freedom and liberty (2 Cor 3 v 17)

We need to receive from Him His Holy Spirit (John 20 v 22)

Jesus says He never refuses the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him (Luke 11 v 13)