

Truth Revived in Late Years

by J.B. Stoney

The sermon emphasizes the importance of two revived truths: the Holy Spirit dwelling on earth and the saints being the body of Christ, baptised by one Spirit into one body.

Scripture: Nehemiah 6:2, Psalm 133:1, John 14:26, John 15:26, John 17:21, 1 Corinthians 10:17, 1 Corinthians 12:13, Galatians 5:16, Ephesians 4:3

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Church Unity"

Description

J.B. Stoney preaches about the revival of important truths in the church, including the doctrines of the Holy Spirit's presence on earth and the unity of saints as the body of Christ. He highlights the opposition faced by these truths and the necessity for believers to accept and maintain them to experience the fullness of God's grace and be effective witnesses for Christ. Stoney emphasizes the significance of the indwelling Holy Spirit for individual assurance and the unity of believers, challenging the church to uphold these truths despite opposition and ignorance.

Transcript

The doctrine of the justification by faith was revived to the church in Luther's day, and in late years two great truths have also been revived; one, that the Holy Spirit dwells on earth; the other, that the saints are the body of Christ here, baptised by one Spirit into one body, of which He is the Head in heaven. As each of these truths has been maintained, a direct opposition has been raised against it.

The violence and malice of Rome was, and is, arrayed against the first, whilst against the other two there are special adversaries which are only unmasked in proportion as there is persistent faithfulness to the truth. The first thing for the saint to accept is, that distinct and important truths have been revived.

No saint nowadays will deny that justification by faith is an all-important truth, though many in Luther's day, and even subsequently, have conscientiously opposed it.

Many saints in the present day do not see the immense importance of the truth of the presence of the Holy Spirit on earth, and that the body of Christ is here, formed by the baptism of the Holy Spirit; and inasmuch as they do not receive these truths, they do not enjoy the grace conferred by them, nor are they competent to be witnesses of Christ on earth.

Without the doctrine of justification by faith, there could be no assurance to the soul of escape from divine judgment. No one could have a sense of pardon without accepting it.

But many who have a sense of pardon have no guarantee or seal of the divine work in their souls. They do not believe that the Spirit God dwells in them, or that the Holy Spirit forms the saints into one body, or that He dwells here to testify for Christ; so that they cannot, though assured of safety because of justification by faith, be happy individually, nor can they understand their privileges and responsibilities corporately, nor the nature or manner of testimony for Christ here.

Thus there must be ignorance on these most important subjects, unless the truths brought out in these late years be accepted and maintained. Now these truths are united and yet quite distinct. We see in John's gospel that the Comforter would be sent by the Father for the comfort of the individual saint (John 14: 26), while for testimony it is the Lord who sends Him. "The Comforter ... whom I will send unto you from the Father ... He shall testify of Me", chapter 15: 26. Paul alone speaks of the body: "By one Spirit are we all baptised into one body". Now these truths are in advance of the doctrine of justification by faith without works; no exercised heart can deny that they offer and propose a progress far beyond that of justification by faith.

A sinner is lost unless he be justified; this is the beginning; but what advance can there be if there be no unqualified known certainty of it by the indwelling Spirit, and if there be no apprehension of our corporate privileges, nor of the testimony for Christ here?

Yet these truths which confer so much are as little known in this day as was justification by faith in a former day, and the ignorance and opposition of heart to them are as great; otherwise, why are the saints not ready any eager to receive them? Now let us see what these truths involved. First, individually there is no seal nor earnest of the inheritance unless the Holy Spirit dwells in the saint.

When the saint knows himself to be the temple of the Holy Spirit, he is assured both of a present salvation and of a future inheritance. Surely very few believe this, and fewer still enjoy it; but that this truth, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, should have been brought to light in this day, is a momentous fact, and involves great responsibility to all who hear of it.

For if the doctrine of justification was great, this must be still greater, inasmuch as it confirms and establishes, perfectly and eternally, what the former commenced.

The knowledge of forgiveness of sins does not preserve from the flesh. It is only as we walk in the Spirit that we shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. It is Christ living in us and setting us free from everything of the old man.

Many a one who fully believes in justification by faith finds, to the pain and sorrow of his conscience, that he has no control over the flesh, and that he is continually led by it; and this is because he does not believe that the Holy Spirit is the One who would now dwell in his body, to rule and order it for Christ.

If one did not know how the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, one would be surprised at the hesitation of any saint to bow to this truth or to raise any question as to it.

But surely many a pious one in an earlier day raised questions as to the genuineness of justification by faith, and we ought not to be surprised at finding still greater and more subtle opposition to this. Alas! the flesh is the great opposer to this truth. All that the flesh likes is opposed to it.

There is a personal opposition to it, because it sets aside man in his own will completely; and therefore, though the deliverance be desired by the conscience, there is an unwillingness to give up oneself, and to acknowledge the Holy Spirit as the guest who is to rule and order instead.

Besides, unless a saint is in himself a temple of the Holy Spirit, unless he has drunk of the self-same Spirit, he cannot see how we are all baptised by one Spirit into one body.

But when he enjoys the privileges which are his through the indwelling Spirit, he enters also into the responsibilities of the great calling of the church is committed to the apostle Paul, and taught in the epistle to the Ephesians. If saints are members of the body of Christ, formed into one body by the Spirit of God, they are bound to preserve this unity in the bond of peace. They have to refuse everything which would grieve or hinder the Spirit.

I cannot confine myself to my own conscience, or to the consciences of those immediately in fellowship with me. Whatever is necessarily incumbent on me, as of the one body, is equally necessary and incumbent on any other member of it as a member.

I am not speaking of matters of mere conscience; but whatever would defile me as a member of Christ's body, I must regard as defiling to any other member; otherwise I do not understand the unity of the body, and that it is formed by the Spirit God.

If I understand that I am a member of the body of Christ on earth, I feel that I have a claim on every saint on the earth, and every one of them has a claim on me; and we are bound, in a common responsibility, to meet together and to avow ourselves as of this oneness - "one loaf" - at the Lord's table, thus expressing our unity. Hence the table must be one, however extended; it is only one, as the Holy Spirit is one, and any one member received or excluded at one place must be received or excluded at every place.

If there be but one table - and there is but one - anything done or maintained by any one, with disqualifies him from the table is binding on everyone forming the table. The length of the table does not make that right or allowable at one end, which is wrong, contrary to the Lord, at the other. The whole is answerable for a part, for it is an expression of the body. It must be so, otherwise there would be a denial of the unity of the Spirit. Now the maintenance of this truth would impose on us an order of union and service to one another unknown and unpracticed in the church generally, and would expose every one maintaining it to painful separation from, and exclusiveness with regard to, every saint refusing to bow to the great responsibility of belonging to this high position; for a member who will not be a true member is like a dislocated one, causing suffering rather than being of use. There is no truth that the art and malice of Satan so assails as the truth of the mystery of Christ.

It connects the saints so distinctly with Christ in heaven, and with one another by the Spirit of God, that one who realizes it is superior to everything of man, although a man himself, and living among men; and hence there is no truth so little known or enjoyed, nor any which so many have in a sense received, but have afterwards surrendered as untenable. There is no truth so difficult to hold in any measure along with what is ordinarily received.

Let any one ask himself how much he enters into being united to Christ as Head, and to the saints in one body here on earth, by the Holy Spirit, and he will see, if he judges truly, that he knows little of this wondrous truth.

And it is because it is the greatest and the most blessed truth that Satan, the spirit of evil, is more opposed to it than to any other; and this accounts for the laxity, so deadly and terrible in its character, which has sprung up, and will ever spring up fiercely, as the truth is maintained fully, in order to neutralize it. Now the great opposition to this truth does not come from the saints who are utterly ignorant of it, but from those who in word avow that they hold it.

New as it is, and long as it was lost to the church, they profess to be enlightened in it, and assume that they are all but martyrs for this truth of the unity of the saints; and yet, from not understanding the nature and the susceptibilities of this divine union and what it claims, they really undermine the truth by their hollow and partial imitation of it. The greatest wile or by-path is that which comes nearest the true thing, and the curious strategic way in which they defend and propagate their laxity, while avowing this truth in word, is astounding. Brotherly love and social intercourse are in their mind the two great evidences or results of this truth, and thus they are deceived.

But however satisfied they may be with themselves, they never come to the knowledge of it divinely, but subvert in principle what they profess to know, and therefore they are, as Sanballat and Geshem in a former day (Nehemiah 6: 2), to be especially resisted and avoided.

The great thing for the faithful to note is the form in which Satan seeks to undermine this truth. Each corps of adversaries is to be known by its facings. But I press that nothing shows the importance of this truth more than the peculiarity of the weapons which have been used to neutralize it, and by those too who in conscience consider they are upholding it.

The more one has the anointed eye, the more one is astonished at the art and subtlety in which this strange warfare has been carried on. It is not an open enemy, but mine own familiar friend, he that supped with me, who hath lifted up his heel against me.

Since the days of Judas down, I suppose there never was a more fearful trespass committed in the church against Christ than the opposition of those who in word accept the truth of the unity of the body, and yet are lax in their separation from those who are in association with unsound teaching.

I speak not now of individuals; I only call attention to the fact of the character and nature of the adversary, which by assuming the truth can come near enough to strike the deadliest blow. But besides the Holy Spirit being here to than comfort and establish the individual saint, and to unite each to the other in one body with the Head in heaven,

He is dwelling here to witness for Christ; He is the power of testimony for the absent Christ. The Jew, to whom God had committed the lively oracles, has rejected the Son of God; and the gentile has used the sword of power, which God had placed in man's hands, against the Lord of glory.

Man had in a twofold way proved his unfitness to be the agent for Christ in His absence. Hence the Holy Spirit is sent down to dwell here, not only to comfort the hearts of the saints, but to testify of Christ, convicting the world, giving evidence of its guilt, and of God's judgment.

So distinctly and altogether is the Holy Spirit the instrument of all power that He does not, and could not, accept co-operation or countenance from man as man or from the world, seeing that He is evidence of the world's position before God, and also that He is able to affect everything by Himself according to mind of God.

No human means of any kind whatsoever can impart or secure divine comfort to our hearts, and neither can any other than the Holy Spirit testify for Christ. If through faith I accept Him for the one, I must accept Him for the other; for I am really weak in my apprehension of the first, which I need for my own individual blessing when I do not see Him in the second. He is neither the Comforter in power for my own heart nor for service. The maintenance of this truth imposes on us a very peculiar path, for everything has been carried on in the professing church on quite a different principle; and as no sect in Christendom accepts this truth in this simple way, I must, if I hold it, run counter in testimony and service to every known denomination. Although the Holy Spirit as the sole agent of testimony for Christ here is plainly revealed, yet men's mind are so warped by habit and theological tradition that they do not see how they are diverted and debarred from the true path of a servant on the earth.

Now as soon as any one seeks and by faith enters on this new path, a path lost sight of until late years, so soon will he be assailed in every conceivable way, according to his earnestness of heart, to go back in measure to the things he has left.

It makes Satan desperate to see even one able to stand forth and express entire confidence in the Spirit of God on earth, and to work on patiently without having recourse to any of the expedients which even the godly use for the dissemination of the gospel. But seeing that this is one of the great truths revived in this day, shall we not boldly insist on it and maintain it, as in their day the martyrs insisted on justification by faith? Let us not confuse our minds by asking, How can we do without this or that? How can the ark be carried without a cart?

We should simply accept the truth of God as set forth in His word. The worst opposition comes from within, and from the true-hearted, who cannot understand how they can carry on the testimony without the means and appliances to which they have been accustomed from time immemorial.

This is the great trial of this day; but God will indicate the faithful. May our eyes be more simply turned to Him

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