

The Spirit of Christ

by Mariano Di Gangi

The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Jesus because he is intimately involved in Jesus' life and devoted to his glory, and his ultimate goal is to create in us a character that reflects Jesus.

Duration: 26:30

Scripture: Luke 4:18, John 5:39, Revelation 1:1

Topics: "Holy Spirit"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the power of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' ministry and how it relates to our own lives. He highlights how Jesus was anointed by the Spirit to preach the gospel, bring freedom to the oppressed, and announce the time of God's acceptance. The speaker also emphasizes the role of the Spirit in Jesus' journey to the cross, where he became the sacrifice for our sins. He then discusses the strange situation in Acts where the Holy Spirit prevents Paul and his team from preaching in Asia, highlighting the mysterious ways in which the Spirit works.

Transcript

Reading from the New Testament Scriptures, from the written Word of God, as it is recorded for us in the 16th chapter of the book of the Acts of the Apostles, beginning at verse 6. Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the Word in the province of Asia. When they came to the borders of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas.

During the night, Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia, standing and begging him, come over to Macedonia and help us. After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. Have you sensed the strangeness in this particular passage of Holy Scripture? Think it through again step by step.

We usually take this passage as a basis for a missionary challenge to go over and to help those from today's Macedonias who call us to their side, and that is true. But the strangeness of this scripture is found in the earlier part of it. Did you notice it? Here is the Apostle Paul and his missionary team intent on evangelizing the Roman province of Asia, which is the western fringe of Asia Minor, today the land of Turkey.

They want to go there to preach the Word, and yet they are kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the Word. What a strange thing. On the day of Pentecost, in Acts chapter 2 verse 4, we read that when the Holy Spirit was poured out, he so filled and flooded the hearts of the disciples that they spoke as the Spirit gave them utterance and they declared the mighty acts of God.

And now that same Spirit, who filled and flooded the lives of the disciples at Pentecost so that they could preach the Word, stifles the Apostles, turns them aside, and says, no, you are not permitted to preach the Word in the province of Asia. And that I find exceedingly strange. Something stranger occurs, for in verse 7 we are told that they were ready to cross streams and to find their way through steep rugged mountain passes to get into the region of Bithynia.

Now surely God has a purpose for the people of Bithynia. It's a highly civilized part of the ancient world. It contains cities like Nicaea and Chalcedon, which within a few centuries will be synonymous with biblical orthodoxy and a stand for the great doctrines of the faith.

At Nicaea, in the fourth century, they're going to develop the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and establish it firmly once and for all on the basis of biblical teaching. At Chalcedon, they're going to define what some theological liberals have sneeringly called Chalcedonian Christology, a super irrelevance. They're going to define on the basis of Scripture in the year 450-451 AD that in the one person of Jesus Christ you have a divine nature which was his from all eternity, equal with God and worthy of worship, and a human nature that relates him to us without the fallibility of sin, and that this Jesus Christ being truly God and truly man is the only bridge or mediator we need for each of us to get back to God.

That, I submit, is not irrelevance. That is biblical Christology worthy of the name. That's what was to happen within a few centuries at Nicaea and Chalcedon, but now when the Apostle wants to go into that culturally rich and highly civilized region, the spirit of Jesus says no, and the team withdraws to a city near the site of ancient and legendary Troy.

The team cools its heels in the town of Troas, a busy seaport, a springboard for Europe, and there during the night the Apostle Paul has a vision and the vision is that of a man of Macedonia and the voice that comes with the mission pleads, come over and help us. For we are Gentiles who have gotten sick and tired of the immorality of our pagan past. We are Gentiles who have gotten sick and tired of the idolatry as well as immorality of our past.

There is a void in us and we are looking for it to be filled with the truth of God and with the God who is true, come over and help us. Paul and his team must have wondered. We wanted Asia and God gave us Troas.

We wanted Bithynia and God gave us Troas. And at the time we were frustrated, at the time we were disappointed, at the time we felt that our talents were being wasted and our zeal was being squandered. And then we realized afterward what God had in mind.

He wanted us to wait for further instructions and to invade the continent of Europe with the gospel that brought about a tremendous change in the history of that continent. There may be some of you out here today who have wanted Asia and gotten Troas, who have wanted Bithynia and gotten Troas, and all your intentions and all your drive and all your dreams seem to be put on hold. God may have in mind for you something else and something better in his own timing.

Later on those regions were evangelized, but right now the Holy Spirit on his agenda had the evangelization of Europe with a breakthrough operation at Philippi and then proceeding onward into Thessalonica and into Berea and into Corinth and into Athens to plant the gospel firmly in the Western world. And so hearing the voice, after seeing the vision, they came to the inescapable conclusion that God wanted them to go to Europe and to evangelize that continent. Today I want to focus on just four words in the text.

The Spirit of Jesus. Have you ever thought of why the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, is here called the Spirit of Jesus? Let me suggest two simple but scriptural reasons as to why the Holy Spirit, God's Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, should be called the Spirit of Jesus. The first reason is that the Holy Spirit was involved in the life of Jesus Christ in a very unique and distinct way.

At every single major turn in the life of Jesus you find the presence and powerful activity of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Jesus because his activity is inextricably intertwined with the activity of Jesus on the earth. How was the man Christ Jesus conceived? In the womb of the Virgin Mary.

It was not by the procreative activity of Joseph the carpenter of Nazareth, but by the overshadowing of the Spirit of the Most High. He was conceived of the Holy Ghost and then born of the Virgin Mary. At the genesis of the creation of the humanity of Jesus in the womb of the Virgin, there is an act of the life-giving Spirit of God.

He is the Spirit of Jesus generating his humanity right at the beginning of his earthly existence. Jesus goes to the River Jordan to be baptized by that rugged revivalist preacher named John the Baptist. And what happens when Jesus is baptized at the Jordan River? The heavens are opened, the voice of God is heard, this is my beloved Son, in him I am well pleased.

And then the Spirit of God descends upon him in the form of a dove, empowering him and equipping him for the work that he must do, culminating at Calvary as the sacrifice for your sin and mine. Jesus comes up from the waters of baptism fresh from this experience, reassured by the Father that he is indeed his beloved Son. And what does the Spirit do? The Spirit puts his hand on the shoulder of Jesus and steers him inexorably toward the desert, there in the wilderness to have an encounter with the evil one, there at the very beginning of his messianic career to come face to face with Satan to meet him and to master him.

Driven by the Spirit into the wilderness in that first campaign of the kingdom to defeat his enemy and ours, and he did it at the leading of the Spirit. Jesus begins his ministry. He goes into the synagogue at Nazareth, he unfurls the scroll that is brought to him, and he reads from the 61st chapter of the book of the Prophet Isaiah that the Spirit of the Lord is upon him, anointing him to preach the gospel to the poor, anointing him to proclaim liberty to those who are bound by Satan, enabling him to offer sight to the blind, release to the oppressed, and to announce that this was the time of God's golden opportunity, the year of the Lord's acceptance.

Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation, come back to God. It was in the power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus began his ministry on earth, both the mighty miracles that he performed and the matchless words that he taught. And when the shadows lengthened, and the fickle crowd had vanished, and the disciples had scattered, and one of his intimate followers betrayed him and another denied him, and he was left alone carrying the crushing load of your guilt and mine and the judgment of God upon that guilt, how did he make it all the way to the cross? Hebrews chapter 9 verses 11 through 14 tell us how he did it.

It was through the eternal Spirit that he was sustained and enabled to press on and to go no matter what the cost and to lay down his life as a ransom for many. The same Holy Spirit who had sparked the beginning of his humanity in the darkness of the Virgin's womb enables him in the darkness of Calvary as he hangs between heaven and hell to give his life for your sin and mine, and he did it through the eternal Spirit. And when his limp, livid, lifeless body was taken down from the cross, and when he was buried in a borrowed grave, on the third day we know what happened.

He was raised from the dead to live forevermore, and how was that accomplished? Romans 8 verses 9 through 11 give us the secret of the Lord's resurrection. It was the work of the Holy Spirit who is the Lord and giver of life. And so we see why he is called the Spirit of Jesus, because he is intimately bound up with every aspect of the life of Jesus on earth.

His conception, his birth, his temptation, his ministry, his sacrifice, his resurrection are all intimately involved with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. But there's a second reason why the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Jesus. It's not only that he is involved in the life of Jesus, but that he is devoted to the glory of Jesus.

The Holy Spirit does not focus attention on himself. The great preoccupation of the Holy Spirit is to point us in the direction of Jesus Christ that Christ might be glorified. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is Christocentric.

The Spirit wants us to see Jesus and to glorify Jesus. I thank God for the way in which the charismatic movement has shaken up the dying embers of the Christian Church and blown new life amidst those dying embers. But if the charismatic movement in any of its aspects ever leads us to shift our eyes from the centrality of Jesus, we do the Holy Spirit desperate and we grieve him seriously.

For the Holy Spirit delights in nothing more than to point us to Jesus that Jesus might be glorified. How do we know that? We know that from what Jesus says in John chapter 16 verses 13 and 14. Jesus says, when the Holy Spirit comes he will lead you by the hand into an understanding of the truth and he will glorify me for he will take those things that relate to me and he will interpret them to you and he will help you to hear them, to see them, and to understand them.

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to enlighten the eyes of our understanding so that we may see Jesus as we study the Scriptures. It is the work of the Spirit to show us the person of Jesus Christ. When you and I read the Scriptures, what are we looking for? Jesus gives us the clue.

He said, search the Scriptures because they testify of me. And it's the Holy Spirit who pulls aside the veil and gives us a glimpse of the glory of Jesus Christ as he is revealed in the Scriptures. And so for example, when we turn to the first chapter of the book of the Revelation, our mind is not immediately filled with speculations about Armageddon and the identity of the beast and the dragon and the harlot, though they exist in that book, but our mind is filled and our landscape is filled with the person of Jesus Christ.

It's the revelation of Jesus Christ and we see him in the glistening glory of his awesome majesty. And when we behold him, we can only do two things, adore him and repent of all those things that keep us from being like him. C.S. Lewis once pointed out, and rightly so, that the way in which the conviction of sin comes to people like us is not by the harangue of a minister who lays the law down and puts a guilt trip on people.

What brings about a conviction of sin and shatters our pride and reduces us to the rubble of repentance is a view of Jesus and the perception of the great gap that still separates us from being like him. He is truth. Aren't we tainted with falsehood? He is humility.

Aren't we infected with pride? He is righteous. We are too often merely self-righteous. He is just, and yet how often we are willing to take the route of expediency and compromise principle.

He is God-centered and we are self-centered, and there's nothing that reduces us to repentance more speedily or powerfully than to see Jesus in all his awesome matchless purity and holiness. And it's the work of the Holy Spirit when you and I feel uncomfortable in the presence of Jesus, and we realize that we are not everything we ought to be, and we are weighed in his balances and found wanting, and alongside the wobbly line of our life there is the straightedge ruler of his absolute perfection. The Holy Spirit shows us Jesus and glorifies Jesus by bringing each of us to the point of heartbroken repentance.

But the Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus by doing more than that. He is not satisfied to bring us to the mourner's bench to reduce us to repentance and leave us there. He wants us to see Jesus as Savior.

He wants us to understand that this is a faithful saying worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world sinners to damn, no sinners to save. He wants us to understand that what we could not do, Jesus is willing to do and has already done, namely he has paid the penalty of your sin and mine, whatever it has been, and he has paid it in full for all those who turn from their sin and turn to him and ask him to be their Savior. And the Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus by presenting him to us as the Savior, the great physician who can heal us of the mortal plague of sin.

It is the Holy Spirit, as Paul puts it in 1st Corinthians 12 verse 3, who leads us to the point of acknowledging the supreme mastery of Jesus Christ. No man, says Paul, no man can acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. For the Spirit comes and bends our will so that we willingly submit to the Lordship of Jesus and we learn for once in our lives to say, yes, Lord, Lord, what will thou have me to do? The Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus by presenting him to our eyes as Lord, filled with awesome majesty and infinite authority, so that we will bow before him and commit our lives to him and be willing to live for his glory.

The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Jesus because he is devoted to the glory of Jesus and he wants us to experience likeness to the Lord Jesus. There's a fascinating verse that occurs at the end of 2nd Corinthians chapter 3. It's a chapter that begins with the story of how people are dim-sighted and cannot perceive the glory of Jesus, and it ends on this great wonderful note that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty from all those things that keep us from being Christ-like, that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is true liberty, and when the Spirit of God works in us, we are changed from one degree of glory into another so that at the last we shall be like Jesus. That is the work of the Holy Spirit, to create the kind of character in you and me so that when Jesus looks into our eyes, he can only see the reflection of himself.

That's the work of the Holy Spirit, to refashion us after the likeness of Jesus that he might be glorified in us. And so we see why Dr. Luke, the historian of Paul's missionary journeys, chronicling the episode that took them from Asia Minor through Troas beyond their frustration and disappointment to the intention God had had for them, and how that in this account, in an almost incidental way, he refers to the Spirit of God as the Spirit of Jesus, intimately involved in the life of Jesus, whole-heartedly devoted to the glory of Jesus. Let us pray.

Spirit of the Living God, we know that we are not dealing here with mere words on a printed page. We are dealing with the living reality of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we ask that this day and every day of our lives, we may be changed by your work from one degree of glory to another, till at the last we resemble our blessed Redeemer. In his name we pray, amen.

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