

The Holy Spirit

"That which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God manifested it unto them. For the invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse" (Rom. 1:19-20).

"And they, when they heard it, lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, O Lord, thou that didst make the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is" (Acts 4:24).

"Worthy are thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honour and the power: for thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they were, and were created" (Rev. 4:11).

I want to stand right back from the Bible for a minute, and give you a word of advice with regard to studying it. You can take any particular subject that is in the Bible and gather up all that is said about it, and then ask yourself one question: "Why is that?" For example, begin with the coming into the world of the Lord Jesus. Gather up all that is said in the Bible about it and then ask "Why the incarnation?" Or take the cross and gather up from the Old and the New Testaments all that is said about it, and then ask yourself "Why the cross?" Similarly gather up all that you can find about the church and ask "Why the church?" And we should try to give the answer in one single statement. The Lord Jesus came into the world just for this one single purpose. What was it? He went to the cross just for one reason. What was it? The church was brought into being just for one thing. What was that? There may be many aspects of each of these, but they are only aspects of the one thing. It is most valuable to be able to put your finger on the one reason and to be able to say, *That* is it. That is a suggestion for Bible study. What we are going to speak about now will be an example of this.

When we have said all the things that can be said about Him, they are only different aspects of one thing. So we come to the question: "Why the Spirit?"

You may not have recognised it but that one thing was in the passages which we have quoted.

You will remember that the Holy Spirit initiated all the new movements of God. At the beginning of the Bible He was the divine agent in the creation; in Exodus it was the Spirit, as typified in the pillar of cloud and fire, who led the children out of Egypt to become a new nation; then in the wilderness the pattern of the tabernacle was given to Moses and by the Spirit Bezaleel and Aholiab were equipped to make all manner of things for it. Later David said that by the Spirit, God had made known to him the pattern of the temple and lastly the revelation of the House given to Ezekiel was all by the Spirit.

Turning to the New Testament we find that the Lord Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit and was anointed for His ministry by the Spirit, He was raised from the dead through the power of the Spirit and the church was born on the day of Pentecost by the Holy Spirit. These look like many things which the Holy Spirit did, but really He only did one thing in all of them. What is the one all-inclusive work of the Holy Spirit? And it is a matter of the greatest importance for us here to be able to answer that question.

Why did the Holy Spirit bring the creation into existence? Why did He bring Israel out of Egypt? Why did He enable for the building of the tabernacle in the wilderness? Why did He reveal the pattern of the temple to David? Why did He show the House to Ezekiel? And then in the New Testament, why did He bring the Lord Jesus into the world? Why did

He anoint Him? Why did He raise Him from the dead? And why did He bring the church into being? There is just one answer to all those questions.

Now we must get right back behind all that; we have to get back behind the creation to look into the heart of God and when we do so we find one great thing. God wanted to express Himself.

Before that God was somewhere away outside this world and was unknown here. He had never shown Himself. Then God wanted to put Himself into expression. He wanted there to be a manifestation of Himself in a great creation. It was His desire to put Himself into a manifest creation so that whenever you look at anything that God made you would see Him. Look again at Romans 1:20: *"the invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made"*. And then in Revelation 4:11: *"Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honour and the power: for thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they were, and were created"*. Then turn to the passage in between — Acts 4:24: *"O Lord, thou that didst make the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is."* I used to wonder why they prayed like that; and if you look into the Bible you will find that those words are very often used as an appeal to God: *"O Lord, that didst create the heaven and the earth."* I used to think that that was just an appeal to His power, but I have come to see that it means something very much more than that.

Why did He create the heaven and the earth? It was in order that it might be an expression of Himself and if you can put your hand on the purpose of creation you are in line with the purpose of God. If you can be one with the purpose of God, you can be one with the power of God.

Let us go back to the beginning of the Bible again. When God had created the heavens and the earth, then He created man. Why did He create man? Perhaps you have often wondered why you were created. You may have wondered what is the explanation of your having a being. Well, why did God create Adam? The answer is found in what God said then. *"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness"* (Gen. 1:26). If you look at an image or a likeness you expect to see the person of whom it is an image. When you look at a photo of a friend, usually you are able to say: *"Isn't it just like him or her?"* So God made man in order that in man He might manifest Himself. So that when you see man as God intended Him to be you are able to see that God is like. Of course Adam spoilt the image and there never has been a man (except One) who showed us what God is like.

When the Lord Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit into the world, it was to show us what God is like. That was getting right back to what God intended at the beginning when He made man. That is why the Holy Spirit brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, that all the nations round about, in looking at Israel, might see what God is like. But Israel failed God just as Adam had done. That is why the Holy Spirit made the tabernacle in the wilderness. It was intended to be in all its parts an expression or manifestation of God. I expect some of you have studied the type of the tabernacle. Every little part of that tabernacle is a representation of something about God. God is in the innermost part of it. He dwells in the most holy place. Everything, from the centre right out to the outer court, is an expression of something about God. So, you see, the Holy Spirit made the tabernacle in accordance with God's great desire to express Himself. And when we look at the tabernacle, if the Holy Spirit opens our eyes, we see God everywhere.

The same is true of all the other works of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament. It was always to bring God into expression. Of course, that was all type and symbol, but when we come to the New Testament, we come to the reality. Jesus is not a type — He is the real thing. And when we look at Jesus, we truly see God. Not one of us would know really what God is like if we had not met Jesus. You know how true that is in your own

experience. When you came to the Lord Jesus, what was the first thing that you experienced? Was it not this? Now God is no longer far away so that I don't understand or know Him. He is right here in my life and He is very real.

And then again, before we came to Christ, we were very afraid of God. We thought that He was the great Judge of our sins, a very terrible Being. But when we came to the Lord Jesus, we discovered that God was not like that. Now we agree with John when he says that God is love (1 John 4:8). How many of you can say that? How did you know that? Only by coming to the Lord Jesus. He has manifested the Father. He is the answer to God's one eternal desire to manifest Himself.

Then we come to the next thing in the New Testament. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit brings in the church. Why does He do this? It is for the very same reason that He has done all the other things - that the church might be a manifestation of God in this world. This explains all the work of the Holy Spirit.

Now, do you see where that brings us to? If we are born-again children of God, then we are members of the Body of Christ which is the church and as members of the Body we receive the Holy Spirit. And it is that we should be a manifestation of the Lord so that the work of the Holy Spirit is to make every one of us an expression of the Lord.

Why are we Christians? Are we Christians just to be saved from our sins, just to be delivered from judgement, just to receive forgiveness and eternal life? And then is it just to go to heaven when we die? Is that why we are Christians? Well, that is not God's thought about it. All that may be true and included. God is saying to us, I have saved you, forgiven your sins, given you eternal life, for one purpose only — that you should be an expression of Me. All the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives is to produce the likeness of the Lord. If we have been forgiven, given eternal life and if we do a great deal of work for the Lord and yet the Lord is not manifested in us, we shall have missed the purpose of our creation. That is why the Lord allows us to suffer, that the Holy Spirit may make us like Christ through our sufferings. And is it not wonderful how sufferings make Christians like Christ? They do not make people of the world like Christ, but the Holy Spirit uses our sufferings to make us like Christ.

Now you have got to the heart of Romans 8:28: "*God works good in all things to them that are called according to His purpose*". What is His purpose? That we should be a manifestation of Himself. So the Holy Spirit works in everything to bring that about. Now may I ask you another question? What would you think would be the greatest good that could come to you? You see, Romans 8:28 says that God works *good* in all things. What do you call the greatest good that you can think of? Now, if I was asked that what would I say? Well, I could give you an answer quickly right from my heart. The greatest good that could ever come to me would be likeness to my Lord. I hate myself. I long to be like Him. What do you say to that? I am sure that is your answer too. The greatest good that can come to any one of us is that we should be like our Lord. That is the good that God is working in all things to them that love Him. What is the good of my suffering, of all my difficulties? It is this. The Holy Spirit is using them to make us like Christ.

I have told you about the two people whom I saw die. The woman of whom I spoke was my own mother. Now she had terrible sufferings all her life, but do you know, her favourite hymns were all about the love of God. When I was a small boy and could think about things and saw her suffering, my wicked little heart used to wonder how she could possibly sing of the love of God. I thought that if I were like her, I would never believe that God is love. But you see, the Holy Spirit was using those sufferings to make her like her Lord. She would say to me: "My boy, we have to learn patience." And what a joyful thing the love of God is! Prove how faithful He is and how He uses all these sufferings to teach us these lessons. It is not surprising that when she suffered it was all glory.

So that is why we belong to the Lord; it is the only reason why He has brought us to Himself. Then when others look at us, they should be seeing more and more of the Lord. Do take that to your hearts. It is true of us as individuals. It is also why the Holy Spirit brought the church into being. It was not that we should have meetings and Bible studies and preaching and nice fellowship together. These things may have been included. The purpose of the Spirit was that in all places where the Lord's people were, He might be seen. When people come into touch with any company of the Lord's children, it should not be that they merely say that they like the singing or that they are interested in the preaching. No, it should be that they feel that when they meet that people, they see what the Lord is like.

So if you belong to any little company in any place on this earth, the Lord's purpose is that together you should express Him, that people should know that they can find God in your midst, and that they might know what God is like through being with you. They should be able to say that by being with you, they know a little of what God is like.

Satan will do everything he can to spoil the likeness of the Lord, and will try always and everywhere to spoil the expression of God. We should look at everything in the light of that question: does this express the Lord? If two Christians fall out of fellowship, the only way to deal with it is to remind them that they are not expressing the likeness of the Lord. Therefore they are serving the enemy's purpose of spoiling the expression of what God is like. If this is true of us individually and of little local companies, then God intends it to be true of the whole of the church. What a sad thing it is that it is not generally true, but God is going to have it like that at the end.

The last picture of the church in the book of Revelation is as the new Jerusalem. John says: "*(He) showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God*" (Rev. 21:10-11). The last picture of the church is a church that is full of glory.

So Paul closes one of his great prayers with these well-known words: "*Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, unto Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever*" (Eph. 3:20-21). Glory in the church for ever and ever. God has at last got what He intended to have, a wonderful expression of Himself right at the very centre of the universe.

That is the calling with which we are called. Will you make it a personal matter. If we do this, then of course the local churches will be all right, and so will the universal church. So then, the one purpose of the Holy Spirit and the one business of every Christian is that the Lord may be seen in us, Will you make that your concern? Pray earnestly every day, O Lord, make me like Christ. Not I, but Christ, be honoured, loved, exalted, seen, heard and known.