

Pastor Writes

Greetings to you all! We continue to be in this Easter Season celebrating all that God did for us in and through his Son Jesus Christ. Today is also Mother's day and we give thanks to God for their love and care for us. The next major festival that we will celebrate is the feast of Pentecost on 24th of this month marking the outpouring of the promised Holy Spirit freely given to all believers. This Sunday we look at the promise of Jesus about the Holy Spirit with the theme being, 'The Spirit of Truth and Love is promised to the Church.' In John's gospel we see that Jesus tells his disciples that he would not leave them as orphans but will send the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will be an advocate and the Spirit of truth will testify on his behalf. Jesus had taught his disciples before his death that he would have to suffer and die and then be raised again on the third day after which when he ascended to the Father he would pour out the Holy Spirit.

Jesus describes the Holy Spirit of God as an advocate. An advocate is one who appears on behalf of others, arguing the case and pleading for them. The Holy Spirit of God is a mediator, an intercessor and a helper. The helper is a great name for the Holy Spirit because he is the one who stands with us and helps us in our greatest moment of need. The Spirit of God is sent by Jesus to be with us. This was only possible after his ascension to the Father's right hand. Jesus will send the Spirit and the Spirit would reside in the heart of every believer. The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, is sent by Jesus, and testifies on his behalf.

What does the Holy Spirit do? Jesus clearly tells us that the Spirit of truth judges the world. In the Old Testament times the early prophets were kings and judges of God's people. They wrote God's law, ruled God's people and arbitrated in disputes. The Spirit continues that work. He discerns God's mind and reveals it to us. Paul writing to the Romans says, 'and God who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God and adjudges human behavior. The Spirit judges so precisely that it is as if he explores the gap between bone and marrow. (Rom 8:27, Heb 4:12)

The Spirit of truth judges us with regard to sin. The greatest sin is the sin of unbelief- because people do not believe in Christ. It's not God who makes believing hard but we do not want to hear him. We deliberately reject all the evidence that he puts before us to believe his Son Jesus. The Spirit also judges us regarding righteousness. Jesus had completed his work of reconciliation on the cross and was going back to the Father. Our righteousness can come only through the person and work of Christ on the cross and not through our own good deeds. This is the truth that the Holy Spirit instills in us. So when Christ judges us he will judge us on the basis of whether we have appropriated the righteousness that he has made available to us. Finally, the Holy Spirit would also judge us because the ruler of the world stands condemned. The Spirit reminds us that those who follow the ruler of this world and persist in sin will be judged and punished.

The Holy Spirit of God is also the one who reveals the will of God. He is the one who educates our mind and conscience. He guides and reveals what is to come and glorifies Jesus making the reality of Jesus evident for all to see. The Spirit of God is also the comforter, he comforts us in our moments of grief when we are depressed and when we desperately need God's help.

The Holy Spirit is one who helps us to stand firm where there is a growing animosity towards the Church. Jesus himself warned us that, there will be a time when people will kill us and think by doing so they are offering worship to God. We saw that happening in the first century with the stoning of Stephen, where the people felt justified killing him for breaking the law. Jesus has promised us that the Spirit who will come to reside in us is the Spirit of Truth and Love. He will always lead us only in the paths of truth and the ultimate truth - Jesus Christ. Jesus teaches his disciples that following him was the way of the cross and was not going to be easy, but he has promised the Spirit of truth and love to remain with us so that we don't need to be afraid. May God the Holy Spirit truly strengthen and empower us that we may walk in his ways and be strengthened by him.

Shalom

Paul Swarup