

LESSON 6

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND MISSIONS

Introduction

The Holy Spirit of God plays a crucial role in missions. As the living presence of Christ in the heart of the believer, He testifies of Christ, empowers the believer for witness, brings forth fruit, and gives confidence in the midst of uncertainties. He also works in the life of the unbeliever, convicting him of sin and of the saving power of Christ, and uses the written and spoken word as His sword (see Heb. 4:12; Eph. 6:17). He equips the believer and the Church with gifts for the carrying on of the ministry.

In terms of the modern sports-minded world, the Holy Spirit acts somewhat in the capacity of a mentor or coach. He disciplines the Christian, trains him, guides him, and remains constantly at his side during the game of life to encourage him.

The Holy Spirit of God discharges a many-faceted role in God's world-mission. He gives witness to Christ and He empowers Christ's servant. But in a special way, He is the guide, the coach, the mentor of missions. He carries out God's master plan through those men and women who have dedicated themselves to His leadership.

The Holy Spirit is the great Apostle, the great "Sent One" from Christ. He serves the role of empowering the Church in its witness for Christ. He serves as the One who illumines the mind, who gives life, who transforms, and who maintains the Church as the living body of Christ. He not only equips the children of God for their witness but also prepares hearts and circumstances to make their witness effective. The case of Cornelius in Acts 10 would be a case in point.

Missions without the work, the power, and the guidance of the Spirit of God would be doomed to failure as a human enterprise fighting against overwhelming odds. Pentecost clearly underscores two truths about the Gospel: it is meant for the entire world and Christians empowered by the Spirit are the chosen instruments to tell that good news. Let us now look at some of the many roles that the Holy Spirit discharges.

The Comforter

The main word used to describe the person and work of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament is a wonderful, practically untranslatable word, *paraklētos*. Some versions of the Bible translate it as "comforter"; others leave it in a

The Holy Spirit is the living presence of Christ in the heart of the believer:

1. He testifies of _____
2. He empowers for _____
3. He brings forth _____
4. He gives _____

(1. Christ, 2. witnessing, 3. fruit, 4. confidence)

For the unbeliever, the Holy Spirit

1. _____ of sin,
2. _____ of the saving power of Christ,
3. uses the written and spoken _____ as His sword.

(1. convicts, 2. testifies, 3. word)

One role of the Holy Spirit in missions is as the _____.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

transliterated form as *paraclete*. A close study of *paraklētos* reveals something of the Spirit's ministry in missions.

William Barclay, a British New Testament scholar, describes the role of the Spirit as Comforter. "A *paraklētos* is therefore an *encourager*, one who puts courage into the faint-hearted, one who nerves the feeble arm for fight, one who makes a very ordinary man cope gallantly with a perilous and a dangerous situation."¹

The lives of William Carey, Adoniram Judson, George Lisle, and William Wallace clearly show how the Spirit encouraged these ordinary men to accomplish extraordinary feats. The infinitive form of the word is *parakalein*. The word applies particularly to encouraging men, cheering them to great deeds and lofty thoughts. It is used in connection with battle. The *paraklētoi* or "encouragers" were veterans that encouraged the soldiers both before and during the battle.

In modern missions, the missionary, faced by rapidly changing social conditions, militant opposition from political and religious philosophies, and at times extreme nationalism, looks to the Comforter who readies him for the battle of life. Although hard pressed on every side, the Christian can count on One who stands at his side as the powerful presence of the living Christ.

Turning again to Barclay, who has made an incisive study of the role of the *Paraclete* or Comforter, we find the use of the word in the Old Greek version.

The word *paraklētos* has a great Septuagint background of that kind of comfort and consolation in distress which keeps a man on his feet, when left to himself, he would collapse. It is the comfort which enables a man to pass the breaking-point and not to break.²

The Holy Spirit enables the Christian to meet the crises and the common places of life with victory. He stands ready to help the Christian in those situations with which he cannot cope by himself. *Paraklētos* is passive in form and means "one called along side of" to help. Its meaning, however, is active because once called in He lends active help.

Although the verb form of the word appears frequently in the New Testament, the noun form appears only five times—all in the writings of John. In 1 John 2:1, the reference is to Jesus, and the translation is "Advocate." The other four occurrences appear in John 14–16 in the intimate conversation Jesus held with His disciples the night before He was crucified. Jesus promised the dis-

¹ William Barclay, *More New Testament Words* (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1958), p. 134.

² Barclay, *More New Testament Words*, p. 135.

The Comforter is a p _____
(paraclete) or e _____.

(paraklētos, encourager)

In describing the Holy Spirit as a helper,
John called Him the _____.

(Advocate)

ciples that He would not leave them as abandoned orphans but that He would send “another helper” like Himself. As Jesus spoke that night, in the context of danger, death, frustration, and coming persecution, He gave the disciples the promise of the Spirit. The Spirit would be the disciples’ Helper, Intercessor, and Guide. He would be their Comforter in the sense of strengthening them for their task.

Missionary translators have uncovered riches as they have sought to translate *paraklētōs* into the various languages of the world. One of the most fascinating experiences was that of Miss Estella Myers who worked among the Karre tribe of French Equatorial Africa.

Miss Myers explained the work of the Paraclete to her translation informant as a Comforter, a Friend who guides, helps, comforts, and empowers. Her informant stated that the best translation of that idea would be “one who falls down beside us.” When Miss Myers asked why this particular translation, he explained that his people, in the main, were porters (burden bearers). As such they often carried heavy loads on trips that lasted for weeks or even months at a time.

As porters, they had to pass through all sorts of climates. Often, these porters, far from home, would fall sick with fever and dysentery. At times they became too weak to continue the journey. The other tribesmen had to continue; they could not wait for their sick companion. There he lay helpless. If night overtook him in his weak and helpless state beside the trail, death from the attack of a wild animal or at the hand of an enemy surely awaited him.

Alone and too weak to defend himself, he needed a friend. At times a friend came along the trail. Seeing his plight, he would “fall down beside him to help him.” He would lift him up, walk beside him, and help him into the safety of the next village. *Paraklētōs*, said the informant, is “one who falls down beside us.”

The paraclete concept helps us understand how the Spirit works both in the Christian’s life and in the missionary enterprise.

The Guide

In addition to His role as Comforter and Companion in missions, the Spirit of God is also the Guide. He exercises His sovereign authority in the selection of personnel, in choosing the field, and in opening and closing doors of missionary activity. He not only endues the individual missionary with power but also directs the entire enterprise. He chose Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13; He directed Philip to the eunuch in Acts 8; He closed Asia to Paul in Acts 16:6; and He opened the limitless opportunity of

As Comforter, the Holy Spirit strengthens Christians for their _____.

(task)

What did Miss Myers find Paraclete meant in the language of the Karre tribe? _____

(One who falls down beside us)

In the role as Guide in missions, the Holy Spirit exercises sovereignty in—

- 1. the selection of _____,*
- 2. the choice of _____,*
- 3. the opening and closing of doors of missionary _____.*

(personnel, field, activity)

Europe in Acts 16:9. Perhaps the contrast between the fruitfulness of that day and the lesser results in our own rests in the willingness of the early Church to follow the plans of the Spirit in every instance.

If we may see the term with no irreverence, the Holy Spirit is the Coach or Mentor of missions. In military terms, He is the Field General. From His vantage point of the perfect knowledge of the will of the Father, the intent of the Son, and the movement of God in history, He is able to select, direct, and plan to send the proper elements into battle. To refuse to listen diligently for the Spirit's direction is to assure failure in missions. To follow His directions is to assure victory.

The Power

Jesus promised power (*dunamis*) with the coming of the Spirit (Luke 24:49). He told them that the Spirit's coming would endue them with dynamic power (Acts 1:8). Only after possessing this personalized divine power were they to undertake the otherwise impossible task of evangelizing the world.

Paul stated that his preaching was not characterized by human wisdom and astute psychology but by divine power (1 Cor. 2:4, 13). The Spirit's power made effective the presentations of Paul.

Speaking on the absolute necessity of the power of the Spirit in missions, Blauw states, "The Easter message can be brought to the nations only by the reality of Pentecost."³

Jesus' promise to be with His disciples in the Commission is accomplished by His presence through the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:20). His presence in missions and in the entire mission of the Church is God's seal: His guarantee that Jesus will be exalted and that His people will have power.

The Transformer

A present day experience illustrates the work of the Holy Spirit as Transformer. A missionary in a series of evangelistic services in a border town between Guatemala and Mexico was preparing to show films on the life of Christ.

The film began and was flashed on the screen. Because the power was low, the image of Christ was dim and hard to distinguish. Although the crowd listened intently, the spoken words of Christ were garbled and unclear. The people could not get the message of Christ clearly.

³ Johannes Blauw, *The Missionary Nature of the Church* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1962), p. 89.

READ ALL OF THE TOPIC THE POWER BEFORE DOING THE FOLLOWING EXERCISES.

Another role of the Holy Spirit in missions is to give _____.

(power)

In Luke 24:49, what did Jesus promise His disciples? _____

(power with the coming of the Spirit)

According to Acts 1:8, when were the disciples to begin their world task? _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Another role of the Holy Spirit in missions is as _____.

(Transformer)

The Holy Spirit plays the role of Transformer in the mission task. The words and illustrations of preachers and missionaries may remain unclear and difficult to understand. Then the Holy Spirit comes and makes application of the truth to the hearer's heart. His transforming power makes the person of Christ clear; it makes the words of Christ understandable and meaningful. The Holy Spirit makes the words live.

This power in missions can be clearly seen in the preaching of Peter at Pentecost. When Peter finished, a remarkable thing happened: "Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?'" (Acts 2:37, RSV).

The Supplier

The Battle of Alamein, one of the decisive battles of World War II, hinged on the matter of supplies. Winston Churchill described the importance of this battle as the "turning of the Hinge of Fate." Much of the German general Rommel's strength depended on the mobility of his famed tanks. Before the battle, Winston Churchill informed the prime ministers of the British Commonwealth that an important German tender had been sunk, assuring a shortage of ammunition and supplies for German and Italian troops.

At a time when Rommel might have retreated with his troops and set up another battle position, the supply of gasoline ran short. The victory by the allied forces was the first of a string of victories that finally brought an end to the European segment of World War II. Sufficient supplies had been a decisive factor in the battle.

In spiritual warfare, the Spirit of God supplies the resources, the spiritual gifts, and the enduements necessary for the accomplishment of Christ's mission through God's people.

The New Testament uses two terms to refer to the gifts the Spirit gives the Church for the carrying on of its ministry and testimony. The first word (*pneumatikon*) means spiritual gifts, thoughts, opinions, and precepts that come from the working of the Spirit in the Christian. This term appears in the opening verses of 1 Corinthians 12. There is a second term (*charismata*) used both here and in Romans 12.

The *charismata* are gifts of grace, freely and graciously provided by God. They are special gifts, of a non-material sort, that God bestows on individual Christians for the building up of the body of Christ. Thayer's Greek lexicon indicates that spiritual gifts are extraordinary powers that distinguish certain Christians and enable them to serve the body of Christ. These gifts proceed

As Transformer--

1. The Holy Spirit makes the words of Christ u _____ and m _____.
2. He applies truth to the hearer's h _____.

(1. understandable, meaningful; 2. heart)

When Peter preached at Pentecost in the power of the Spirit, the people asked, " _____ ?"

(What shall we do)

Another role of the Holy Spirit in missions is as _____.

(Supplier)

The Holy Spirit supplies _____, _____, and _____ necessary for the accomplishment of Christ's mission.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

The *charismata* (gifts of the Spirit) are special gifts that _____ bestows on individual _____ for the building up of the body of _____.

(God, Christians, Christ)

from the grace of God and are to be used corporately to the glory of God.

In both Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 Paul points out that there is variety in the gifts, but they are all destined for ministries, for work, and for the strengthening and building up of the body of Christ. It is equally clear that no one person has all of the gifts.

First Corinthians 13 and 14 also form a part of the teaching on the gifts of the Spirit. Chapter 13 shows that love is the required attitude for properly exercising the gifts. Without love, any gift is worthless. Chapter 14 returns to the theme of the final part of 1 Corinthians 12; it reiterates the fact that prophecy which edifies the Church and exalts Christ is preferable to the more esoteric gifts sought by the Corinthians.

First Corinthians 12:27-30 deals not so much with gifts as with ministries. The division of responsibility falls between apostles, prophets, teachers, workers of miracles, healers, helpers, administrators, and speakers in tongues.

The Roman list is comparable but gives more emphasis to the offices and to the place of gifts in the building up of the body of Christ. Its special emphasis is on the use of gifts. The special significance of these gifts for missions is that Christ, through His Spirit, equips His Church for the task He has for it.

The Spirit of God, expressing the heart of the Father, makes plans for reaching a rebel world. He plans the strategy, and He chooses whom He will use for the task. Those that are chosen are also empowered. If they are Spirit-directed, they go forth in His name conquering and to conquer. The Spirit of God is the effective presence of Christ in His people, guiding and empowering them to exalt Christ in the world.

There is variety in gifts, but they are all for _____, for _____, and for strengthening and _____ up the body of Christ.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

What does 1 Corinthians say is the preferred gift? _____

(prophecy)

Now that you have finished reading about the five roles of the Spirit in missions, can you name them?

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3)

After reading the study guide text, answer the following questions.

1. Describe the relation of the Holy Spirit to the believer. _____

2. How does the Holy Spirit work in the heart of the unbeliever? _____

3. List five roles of the Holy Spirit in missions as listed in this chapter. _____

4. What is the meaning of *Paraclete*? _____

5. How does the Holy Spirit in His role as Comforter help the Christian? _____

6. How did Miss Myers translate *Paraclete* for the Karre tribe? _____

7. List four ways in which the Holy Spirit as Guide undergirds missions. _____

8. What instructions did Jesus give His disciples in Luke 24:49? _____

9. When were the disciples to begin the world task according to Acts 1:8? _____

10. Describe the Holy Spirit's role as the Transformer in missions. _____

11. What was the reaction of the hearers who heard Peter at Pentecost? _____

12. In what way is the Holy Spirit God's Supplier for missions? _____

13. Give the meaning of the gifts of the Spirit or *charismata* (pronounce *care is mah' tah*). _____

14. What is the purpose of spiritual gifts? _____

15. What is the most excellent of the gifts? _____

16. Summarize the work of the Holy Spirit in missions. _____

Supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3)

Read Acts 1–14 and answer the following questions. Consult additional resource books where available.

1. How did the coming of the Spirit fulfil the promise of Jesus that the disciples would not be left orphans? (See John 14:16–26, Acts 1–2.)
2. Explain the role of the Spirit at Pentecost. (See Acts 2.)
3. Give several reasons why the Holy Spirit is the chief actor of the Book of Acts.
4. List three distinct ethnic groups the Book of Acts mentions as having received a Gospel witness.

Advanced activity (Level 3)

Read pages 25–35 in *Frontiers in Missionary Strategy* by Peter Wagner and answer the following questions.

1. Explain the relation of the Holy Spirit to the Son of God and to Christians.
2. Discuss the Holy Spirit's ministry in the world.
3. What is the alternative to a missionary strategy based on need?
4. How have some Christians used the Holy Spirit as a smokescreen?
5. Explain how the good may become enemy of the best when we do not make disciples.

Seminar Discussion

1. How does the Holy Spirit help the Christian in his life?
2. Discuss His role as the Comforter.
3. Give biblical examples how the Holy Spirit serves as Guide in missions.
4. How does the Spirit empower the Christian's witness today?