

Faith -N- Focus

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“Pneumatology: Who Is the Holy Ghost?”

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“Pneumatology: Who Is the Holy Ghost?”

Monthly Summary

In this month of Faith-N-Focus, we will continue our study of the person and work of the Spirit. The Holy Ghost is our comforter, teacher, intercessor, and witness. The Spirit comforts us in that he helps us in all areas of our lives where we need counsel, direction, and strength. When Jesus ascended back to the Father, he did not leave the church comfortless, but he and the Father sent the Holy Ghost to help us fulfill the will of God in our lives, individually and corporately.

The Spirit also teaches us, revealing Christ and God’s will for his church. Although God calls and uses human instruments to teach his Word to the saints of God, only the Holy Ghost alone can reveal to us the depths of the knowledge of God’s love. Indeed, the Spirit teaches a heart-knowledge of God, rather than a head-knowledge alone. “The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” (Ro. 5:5).

Not only is the Spirit our comforter and teacher, but he is also our intercessor, praying for us making intercession to the Father on our behalf. We pray to God, but the Spirit also prays. The impact of his praying is that he always prays according to the will of God. Therefore, the church cannot afford to pray without his divine assistance.

Finally, the Holy Ghost is our inner, ever-abiding witness. He gives witness to the truth of Jesus Christ, speaking both to the church and speaking through the church to the world. The Spirit empowers our testimony and enables us to be true, effective witnesses of Jesus Christ in the world. Only by his help will we be able to fulfill Christ’s mission in and through the church.

July 8, 2018

“Comforter”

Main Point

The Holy Ghost comforts us in our relationship with Jesus Christ.

Introduction

Sometimes we need a friend to talk to and encourage our hearts. Other times, we need a counselor to advise us in our decisions. Perhaps, we just need to know someone is there – that we are not left alone. Maybe we need assurance that everything is going to work out in the end. Whatever we need, “the God of all comfort” and consolation can supply (2 Co. 1:3-4). In today’s lesson, we will see that the Holy Ghost comforts us in our relationship with Jesus Christ.

Key Verse

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever” (Jn. 14:16).

Lesson Summary

For some three years, Jesus walked with his disciples teaching and instructing them in the truth. They heard his voice, saw his actions, and physically touched the Lord (1 Jn. 1:1). During that time, he daily was with them conversing and sharing in their lives and experiences. Jesus called and empowered his disciples (Mt. 10:1); he gave them commands and sent them forth to minister (Lu. 9:2-6); and he encouraged and even reproved them (Mt. 16:17, 22-23). Indeed, Jesus was their comforter – their spiritual mentor, guide and counselor. But soon, according to God’s will, he was scheduled to depart from them. Jesus told his disciples, “I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (Jn. 14:2-3). Although he was leaving, he nevertheless promised not to leave them alone on their own without a comforter (v. 18). Jesus promised to send them another Comforter, the Holy Ghost (Jn. 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). The Holy Ghost took over right where Jesus left off (16:12-14). Although the Holy Spirit was different from the Lord Jesus in person, he was not different in his work and ultimate purpose. Like Jesus, he also came to comfort – thus he is “another” comforter.

Therefore, the Spirit came to assist and console the saints of God in the same ways that Jesus comforted them. The Holy Spirit came to continue Christ's role as helper and guide in the lives of his disciples. Though Jesus left them physically when he ascended to the Father, the Holy Ghost was Christ's spiritual presence, not only abiding with the disciples, but actually indwelling them. Thus, Christ abides at the right hand of the Father in heaven, but he also abides in our hearts through his indwelling Holy Spirit. Because Jesus was leaving them, the disciples were heavyhearted and filled with sorrow (Jn. 16:5-6, 20-22). In this context of sorrow, Jesus promised to send the Holy Ghost (Jn. 16:7). Of course, this speaks to the comfort of the church today. In times of great sorrow and tribulation, we have the consolation of God's Spirit, for Jesus said, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Mt. 28:20). The Holy Ghost, the Comforter, came to fill the church with Christ's joy and peace until he comes again (Ro. 14:17; 15:13). The disciples, of course, did not want Jesus to leave them; nevertheless, it was absolutely necessary that he go away. Otherwise the other comforter, the Holy Ghost, would not come (Jn. 16:7). Clearly, the Holy Ghost is now here in a special way to comfort the church and to help every believer in his Christian walk.

Scripture Study

Jesus was comforter – 1 Jn. 1:1; Mt. 10:1; Lu. 9:2-6; Mt. 16:17, 22-23

The Holy Spirit as comforter – Jn. 14:2-3, 16, 18, 26; 15:26; 16:7, 12-14

Comforting our sorrow – Jn. 16:5-7, 20-22; Mt. 28:20; Ro. 14:17; 15:13

Conclusion

In what sense does the Holy Ghost comfort and help the church? When we are in need, the Holy Ghost will be there to lend his support. Certainly, the Holy Ghost was not sent to do everything for us. He did not come to do the work for us while we sit back and do nothing. Instead, we must take up the responsibility of Christ's mission, and as we do so, the Holy Ghost will help us along the way, especially doing what we cannot do. He will not leave us alone, comfortless, but he will teach, guide, and lead us into God's will in Christ. He will do mighty works through us to the glory of God. He will manifest the presence of Christ through us. Today, the Holy Ghost continues to support the saints, just as Jesus did when he walked upon this earth.

July 15, 2018 “Teacher”

Main Point

The Holy Ghost reveals Jesus Christ and teaches the depths of the knowledge of God.

Introduction

God has given teachers and placed them in the body of Christ. They are gifts to the church. The teaching ministry edifies the body through expounding the Word of Truth and equipping the saints for service. While teachers are instrumentally essential, even critical, for the spiritual growth and perfection of the church (Ep. 4:11-13), the primary and most important teacher in the church is the Holy Ghost. In today’s lesson, we will see that the Spirit is the one who actually teaches and establishes the saints in the truth of Jesus Christ and God’s Word.

Key Verse

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (Jn. 14:26).

Lesson Summary

When God spoke of a future time of restoration for the people of God, he promised to make a new covenant, saying, “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Je. 31:31-34). No longer would the Word of God be written (engraved) merely in tables of stone, but it would be written inwardly – in fleshy tables of men’s hearts by the Spirit of God (2 Co. 3:3-8). Under this new covenant through Jesus Christ, the true knowledge of God cannot be taught by the precept of men but by the Holy Ghost himself indwelling us (Is. 29:13; He. 8:10-11; 1 Jn. 2:26-27). The Spirit writes (engraves) the Word of God upon our hearts. Furthermore, God has placed his Spirit within us to be an ever-abiding Teacher. When Jesus promised the Holy Ghost, he said, “He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (Jn. 14:26). The Spirit’s work is teaching. He will give us understanding in all things – whatever we need from God in order to fulfill the mission of Christ and the church. Specifically, the Holy Ghost will teach us all things

pertaining to Christ and his teachings (Jn. 15:26; 16:14-15). Moreover, until the Spirit reveals the truth of Jesus Christ within our hearts, we have not learned Christ, heard him, and been taught by him (Ep. 4:20-21). The knowledge of the truth is therefore more than head-knowledge and knowing facts about Jesus Christ; it is a relational, spiritual knowledge of God's saving grace and his love in our hearts (Ro. 5:5; Ep. 3:19). Finally, the Holy Ghost is the one who guides the church into all truth. Jesus plainly taught his apostles, saying, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now" (Jn. 16:12). Jesus left many things unsaid – truths that the Holy Ghost would later reveal to the apostles from the Word of God: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth" (v. 13). The Holy Ghost would even reveal "things to come," future insights relevant to the church (v. 13). The apostle Paul explained that the Spirit of God is the key to discerning the depths of the knowledge of God (1 Co. 2:9-14). While the wisdom of the natural man is limited, the Holy Spirit is unlimited in his ability to reveal Godly wisdom and give spiritual understanding to the saints. Since the Word of God was divinely inspired and spoken by the Holy Ghost (2 Ti. 3:16; 2 Pe. 1:21), we need the Spirit to reveal and unlock the depths of the knowledge of God's Word in the church today. Certainly, as we rely on the Spirit of truth for guidance and direction, he will take what is of Christ and reveal it to us from God's Word (Jn. 16:15).

Scripture Study

Written inwardly – Je. 31:31-34; 2 Co. 3:3-8; Is. 29:13; He. 8:10-11; 1 Jn. 2:26-27

Learning Christ – Jn. 14:26; 15:26; 16:14-15; Ep. 4:20-21; Ro. 5:5; Ep. 3:19

The revealer – Jn. 16:12-13; 1 Co. 2:9-14; 2 Ti. 3:16; 2 Pe. 1:21; Jn. 16:15

Conclusion

As disciples and followers of Jesus Christ, we never stop learning about God and growing in the knowledge of his love and truth. Even the most knowledgeable and spiritually established among us still have something to learn in their relationship with Christ. Therefore, all of the members of the church are students of God's Word, and the Holy Ghost is our Teacher.

July 22, 2018

“Intercessor”

Main Point

The Holy Ghost prays for us making intercession to the Father on our behalf.

Introduction

Jesus taught “that men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Lu. 18:1). We should “pray without ceasing” and daily intercede with God, making our petitions known (1 Th. 5:17; 1 Ti. 2:1; Ph. 4:6). As saints of God filled with the Spirit, not only do we pray, but the Spirit also prays with us on our behalf and through us for others. As we seek God, the Spirit is our intercessor. In today’s lesson, we will see why we need the intercession of the Spirit when we pray to the Father.

Key Verse

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (Ep. 6:18).

Lesson Summary

Why do we need the Holy Spirit to make intercession when we pray? First of all, we do not always know how we should pray or for what we should pray (Ro. 8:26). Have you ever come to a spiritual roadblock or to a point that seemed to be a dead-end in your life, and you needed divine direction and guidance because you were uncertain of what to do next? Even when the will of God is clear, the specifics surrounding his will may not be so clear (1 Co. 2:11). We are therefore limited in our human understanding of what and how to pray. In regard to this, Paul used himself as an example when writing of his own infirmities and weaknesses. At one point, Paul was afflicted and prayed three times for his deliverance, but the Lord would not take this affliction from him. Instead, the Lord promised to give him sufficient grace (2 Co. 12:7-9). Clearly, Paul wanted to be free from his “thorn in the flesh,” but God had something different in mind. What we think is best, our perspective, does not always align to God’s mind and thinking. When we do not understand the perfect will of God, the Spirit helps and assists us as we pray. Moreover, he

prays and intercedes in ways that go far beyond our human ability in order to make our praying effective (Ja. 5:16; He. 4:15-16). Humanly, we cannot ascend up to God (Jn. 3:13). Instead, when we pray, we rely on God to condescend to our lowly condition (Ps. 8:4; Ps. 136:23; Lu. 1:48). However, when the Holy Ghost prays on our behalf, he translates our prayers uniquely and communicates our need directly to God. Paul described the Spirit's intercession as "groanings which cannot be uttered" (Ro. 8:26). "Groanings" indicate intercession from deep within the believer. The indwelling Spirit prays in and through us with groanings that surpass any words we ourselves can speak, clearly distinguishing his prayers from our own. When Paul instructed the saints to be strong and spiritually armored, he admonished them to pray in the Spirit: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication **in the Spirit**" (Ep. 6:18). This kind of praying is faith-building (Jude 20). Finally, when we pray in the Spirit, we receive great consolation and comfort. God searches our hearts as we pray. Our own prayers fall short of God's perfect will, therefore we need the Holy Spirit to help us because he always prays in perfect agreement with the will of God (Ro. 8:27). Although we might not understand his groanings, God knows the mind of the Spirit: he understands the utterances of the Spirit and knows exactly what we are praying when we cry, groan, weep, and speak in tongues. When we consider all three of these aspects of praying in the Spirit, we see how important the Spirit is in our prayer life. We need the Spirit to make intercession for us "according to the will of God" (1 Jn. 5:14-15).

Scripture Study

The Spirit helps us – Ro. 8:26; 1 Co. 2:11; 2 Co. 12:7-9

His groanings – Ro. 8:26; Ja. 5:16; He. 4:15-16; Ep. 6:18; Jude 20

God's will – Ro. 8:27; 1 Jn. 5:14-15

Conclusion

Every believer desires the assurance of knowing that "all things work together for good" (Ro. 8:28). But we cannot presume the blessings of Romans 8:28 without the operation revealed in verses 26-27. Only as we pray and intercede by the Holy Ghost can we be fully persuaded that we are praying according to the will of God and have the full assurance that God is working on our behalf "for good."

July 29, 2018

“Witness”

Main Point

The Holy Ghost enables us to be true, effective witnesses of Jesus Christ in the world.

Introduction

In today’s lesson, we will see the importance of the Holy Ghost in the witness of the church. The Spirit is vital to the success of our mission and evangelism because he is the life and power of our witness. He gives force and impetus to our efforts, enabling us to be true, effective witnesses of Jesus Christ in the world.

Key Verse

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Ro. 8:16).

Lesson Summary

The writer of Hebrews explained that the Holy Spirit is a witness of Christ to us, not an external witness only, but an *indwelling* witness (He. 10:15-16). “Because the Spirit is truth,” the Spirit of God always gives witness to the truth *within* the believer (1 Jn. 5:6-10). His witness always agrees with and confirms the Word of God (v. 7). Thus, every true child of God has the *inner* witness of the Spirit of truth abiding in him (Jn. 14:17; Ro. 8:14-16). Regarding the ministry of the Spirit, Jesus taught that the Spirit of truth would speak to the church, not of himself, but rather declaring the things pertaining to Christ and his church (Jn. 16:13-14). The Spirit has a voice. Historically, the Spirit’s ministry through holy prophets has been an important part of God’s plan for the church (2 Pe. 1:21). The Spirit speaks specifically to the needs in the church in every generation where believers will receive his wise counsel (1 Co. 2:13). When writing to Timothy, the apostle Paul declared, “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith” (1 Ti. 4:1). The Holy Ghost spoke specifically to warn the church of a falling away (see also 2 Ti. 3:1; 4:4; 2 Th. 2:3). Warnings are an important part of the Spirit’s witness to the church especially in times of apostasy (Re. 1:10, 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). Moreover,

not only does the Spirit speak to the church within the fellowship of the saints, but the Holy Ghost also speaks through the church to the world of sinners, the unchurched, and the scattered sheep. Jesus assured us that the Holy Ghost would fill our mouths with the right words when we give our defense of the gospel (Mt. 10:17-20; Lu. 12:11-12). We can therefore depend on the Holy Ghost to speak a true witness of Christ through us (Jn. 15:26). However, since the Holy Ghost is our inner witness, we must remain filled with his Spirit after being baptized with the Holy Ghost. Only when our testimony is saturated with the Holy Ghost are we assured of being true, effective witnesses of Jesus Christ. Finally, the apostles were eye-witnesses of Christ's ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension (Ac. 2:21-22, 25; Lu. 1:1-2; 24:46-48; 2 Pe. 1:16). Their witness was authorized by Jesus Christ (Mt. 28:18-20), but also empowered by the Holy Ghost (Ac. 1:8). Although the apostles were Christ's eye-witnesses, the Spirit himself was/is God's witness having raised Jesus from the dead (Ro. 8:11). Therefore, we are not eye-witnesses, but we are Christ's faithful witnesses, having received the same power and anointing of the Holy Ghost, who not only raised up Christ but has quickened us spiritually through faith in Jesus (Ac. 5:32; Ep. 2:1, 5-6).

Scripture Study

The inner witness of the Spirit – He. 10:15-16; 1 Jn. 5:6-10; Jn. 14:17; Ro. 8:14-16

The Spirit speaks to the church – Jn. 16:13-14; 2 Pe. 1:21; 1 Co. 2:13; 1 Ti. 4:1; Re. 1:10; 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22

The Spirit speaks through the church – Mt. 10:17-20; Lu. 12:11-12; Jn. 15:26

We are his witnesses – Ac. 2:21-22, 25; Lu. 1:1-2; 24:46-48; 2 Pe. 1:16; Ro. 8:11; Ac. 1:8; 5:32; Ep. 2:1, 5-6

Conclusion

The world today desperately needs a true witness of Jesus Christ. With some seven billion inhabitants on the face of the earth, fulfilling the mission of the church is humanly impossible. Therefore, we must rely on the Holy Ghost to empower our witness and help us finish Christ's mission. Clearly, he came for this purpose.