

**Text: John 16:5-15; Acts 2:1-13**

**Theme: I Believe in the Holy Spirit**

**Sermon delivered by Reverend Dele Agbelusi during Holy Communion Service on 11/09/2016 at 10.30am**

We know God the Father and know very well the radiance of God's glory -Jesus Christ who is God the Son. But our knowledge of the Holy Spirit is so scanty. He is the God we hardly know, but which cannot be ignored because without Him, we have no life. **We will look at this talk under three headings: 1. Who is the Holy Spirit. 2. What does He do? 3. How can I receive His blessing.**

### **1. Who Is the Holy Spirit?**

Any investigation of the Holy Spirit must begin with this fundamental question. Who is the Holy Spirit? There are two fundamental facts about the Spirit that you need to know.

#### **i) The Holy Spirit Is a Person**

This may seem obvious to you, but it is not obvious to everyone. Some people speak of the Holy Spirit as an impersonal power or influence - a mysterious force from heaven that somehow helps us on the earth.

But the Bible clearly refers to the Holy Spirit in terms that can only apply to a person. For instance, **the Holy Spirit possesses a mind** (Romans 8:27), **he speaks** (Acts 13:2), **he commands** (Acts 8:29), Ephesians 4:30 says, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit." But you can't grieve a force or a power. You can only grieve another person.

In John 16:13 Jesus says of the Holy Spirit, that "he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come." That passage is important because Jesus clearly calls the Holy Spirit a "he."

All the attributes of personality are given to the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. Therefore, we may say that the He is a person, not a mere force or an impersonal power.

#### **ii) The Holy Spirit is God**

The second truth is that the Holy Spirit is not only a person, he is a Divine Person. That is to say, he is God. In the famous story of Ananias and Sapphira in Act 5, Peter says in verse 3 that they had sinned against the Holy Spirit, but in verse 4 he says they sinned against God. Which is correct? Both, because the Holy Spirit is God. That's why when Jesus gave the Great Commission (Matthew 29:19-20), he commanded the disciples to baptize "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." One name, three Persons. That's the doctrine of the Trinity clearly stated. The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God.

The Holy Spirit is not only a person, but he is a Divine Person.

### **The Holy Spirit in Scriptures**

The first mention is in Genesis 1:2 and the last mention of the Spirit is in Revelation 22:17. He's present at the moment of creation (Genesis 1:2) and he's there at the very end of the Bible (Rev. 22:17).

In the Old Testament you see the Holy Spirit coming with great power upon kings, priests, judges and military leaders. He is the cloud by day and the fiery pillar by night that led Israel through the wilderness. The Holy Spirit is the Unseen Hand of God moving through human history to accomplish God's purposes on the earth.

When you come to the New Testament, you see him at work especially in the life of Christ. Our Lord was conceived by the Holy Spirit, who came upon him at his baptism, who led him into the wilderness, who filled him with power to work miracles, who bore witness that he was the Son of God, who was with him in the crucifixion and who raised him from the dead. All that Jesus did, he did in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit was there at Pentecost when the church was born. He was there when Peter and Paul preached across the Roman Empire. It was the Holy Spirit who gave the apostles boldness to preach in the face of persecution and indifference. It was the Holy Spirit who brought unity to the early church and caused it to grow in spite of fierce opposition.

Everywhere you turn in the Bible, you see the Holy Spirit at work. He is the Unseen Hand of God moving through human history to accomplish God's purposes on the earth.

## **2. What Does He Do?**

Theologians often divide the work of the Trinity this way:

- God the Father is the Source of all things.
- God the Son is the Channel of all things.
- God the Spirit is the Agent of all things.

As the Source, all things flow from the Father's will. As the Channel, all of God's blessing flow to us through Jesus Christ the Son. But it is the Holy Spirit who acts as the Agent of the Almighty, who actually carries out the directives of the Father.

### **But what is the Holy Spirit doing in the world today?**

We can answer that from the words of Jesus in John 16:8, "When he (the Holy Spirit) comes, he will convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment." The word "convict" comes from the drama of a courtroom trial. It refers to what the prosecuting attorney does when he argues his case. He puts the defendant on the witness stand and begins to pile up the evidence. Fact upon fact, witness upon witness, truth upon truth, slowly, inexorably, irresistibly building his case until finally the enormity of the evidence is so overwhelming that the judge is forced to say to the defendant, "I find you guilty beyond a reasonable doubt." Not only that, this word means to present the evidence in such an overwhelming fashion that even the defendant is compelled at the end of the trial to step up and say, "I admit it. I confess. I am guilty."

### **The ministry of the Holy Spirit is to bring us to a place of personal conviction.**

The ministry of the Holy Spirit in the world today is primarily the ministry of bringing men and women to the place of personal conviction concerning their own moral guilt before God. These words of Jesus are literally true today. The Holy Spirit works through us so that as we share the gospel with men and women, they are convicted of their true moral guilt before God. As we share the gospel they come to the conclusion, "Yes, I am guilty. Yes, I need a saviour."

### **Our Problem with The Holy Spirit**

But, we are often like the believers in Ephesus. When Paul arrived there for the first time, he asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit since they believed. Their reply was, "We haven't even heard if there is a Holy Spirit." And here's why 21st century Christians in the West sometimes act that way: we're not sure we want the Holy Spirit.

We don't want to do weird stuff, like speak in tongues, heal the sick, and jump pews. We'll leave all of that to our Pentecostal friends, thank you very much. And, there is a lot of weirdness that takes place when the Holy Spirit first descended on the Day of Pentecost - the sound of a rushing wind filled the place where the apostles were staying. Flames of fire

appeared over their heads, and they spoke in languages they had never learned. Well, while it sounds weird, several things were going on at once.

For the Feast of Pentecost, Jews from all over the known-world had stayed in Jerusalem since the Passover. They came from a variety of cities, nations, and tongues. And, so the speaking in “unknown tongues” was a reversal of The Tower of Babel story. Once, as recorded in the Book of Genesis, man had tried to make a name for himself and build a ziggurat that reached into the throne room of God. But God frustrated that effort by confusing their language, mixing up their speech so that they could not understand one another and could not finish the project.

But at Pentecost, God unscrambles that confusion by giving Peter and the other apostles the ability to preach in languages they had not learned, so that everyone who was there, no matter where they were from, understood and heard the story of Jesus. So, when God does weird stuff, it always has a purpose.

But, that doesn't mean we want to be weird, and besides the Day of Pentecost has come and gone. We don't have tongues of fire on people's heads as it was on the Day of Pentecost.

Which brings me to our real problem with the Holy Spirit: We think that the Holy Spirit only does the weird, the miraculous, or the extraordinary.

**But Jesus calls the Holy Spirit “the Comforter.”** That doesn't sound too weird, or even miraculous. Jesus said to the disciples that the Holy Spirit was “with you, and shall be in you.”  
**The Holy Spirit is the abiding presence of God in our lives.**

But whether we are comfortable talking about the Holy Spirit or not, the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives and the lives of all believers.

### **The Holy Spirit Equips the Church**

One of the primary purposes of the Holy Spirit is to give gifts to each follower of Christ. Of course, the greatest gift is God's gift of salvation, but there is more to being a follower of Jesus than just eternal life. There is life here in the body of Christ called the church.

**Paul said that Christ is the head of the body, but that the Holy Spirit gives each of us gifts to fit into the body. Some have supernatural gifts, some have more everyday type gifts, but none of us is overlooked in the gift-giving of the Holy Spirit.**

If I were to suggest to you today that we could do what Jesus did, some of you would think that I was either speaking rhetorically, or I was exaggerating. But that's exactly what Paul, and Jesus himself, said. The key to that, though, is we don't do it alone. By bringing our gifts, and using them in concert with the gifts of others, the body of Christ carries out the work and ministry of Christ in this world today. Feeding people, healing people, announcing the good news, befriending the friendless, demonstrating kingdom values - all these things are only possible if we live in the Spirit, and express the gifts the Spirit of God has given to each of us.

### **What does the Holy Spirit do for believers?**

Here are some of the things he does:

- He baptizes believers in the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:13).
- He seals every believer, thus assuring their salvation (Ephesians 1:13).
- He indwells every believer with his personal presence (I Corinthians 6:19-20)

- He gives spiritual gifts to every believer (I Corinthians 12:11).
- He produces the fruit of a godly life in us (Galatians 5:22-23).
- He enables us to put to death the deeds of the flesh (Romans 8:13).
- He prays for us when we can't pray for ourselves (Romans 8:26-27).
- He sheds the love of God in our hearts (Romans 5:5).
- He enables us to triumph in the midst of suffering (I Peter 4:19).
- He empowers us to boldly witness for Christ (Acts 1:8).
- He makes the things of God real to us (I Corinthians 2:10-14).
- He fills us so that we can please God every day (Ephesians 5:18).
- He creates unity between believers (Ephesians 4:3).
- He guarantees our final salvation in heaven (Ephesians 1:14).

In short, the Holy Spirit does everything to bring us to Christ, everything we need to walk with Christ in this life, and everything we need to take us safely from earth to heaven. He does it all for us and he does it for all of us. None of us could live even one day as a Christian without the aid of the Holy Spirit.

### **3. How Can We Receive His Blessing?**

Everything up until this point has dealt with theology in the abstract, but our greatest need is to know the Spirit deeply and personally. **It's never enough to possess the truth; the truth must eventually possess us in order to change us.**

#### **The Command—Be Continually Filled**

Ephesians 5:18 says, "Be filled with the Spirit." In the Greek that phrase is a present passive imperative. An imperative is a command—Be filled. The passive voice means that we are not commanded to fill ourselves but rather to be filled with the Holy Spirit. The present tense describes something that happens continually. You could legitimately translate this verse "Be continually filled with the Holy Spirit."

God's desire—and his command—for you and I is that we should be continually filled with the Holy Spirit. That means that the filling of the Spirit is not a one-time affair that happens in a crisis, but is instead to be the normal experience of every Christian.

#### **The Reason—We Are Leaky Vessels**

As each day wears on, and the pressures ebb and flow, we may find ourselves depending less on the Holy Spirit and more on our own resources to get us out of trouble. And so, we become bossy or petty or unkind or impatient or just plain cranky and hard-to-live-with. We say mean things to people we love, we fly off the handle, or we simply get silent and refuse to speak to others.

Why does this happen? Picture your life as a beautiful vase. Normally you should be filled to the brim with the Holy Spirit, but under pressure, you begin to leak and out flows the joy of the Spirit and in comes the work of the flesh.

That's why we need to go to the Lord many times during the day, asking for a new and fresh infilling of the Spirit. We leak, and we need new power, new blessing, new strength to face the challenges of the day.

### **But how do we do that?**

Bill Bright's suggestion

What I am going to share with you is what Dr. Bright said: in one of his books:

The first step is to be totally honest with the Lord about your spiritual condition. That means confessing your sins honestly. Begin with the sins of the flesh—anger, bitterness, wrath, malice, unkindness, drunkenness, immorality, impurity, gossip, slander, greed, pride, sloth, gluttony, envy, lust. Take a piece of paper and write down the sins that the Lord brings to mind. Just write them down, listing each one individually. Then sit in silence for a period of time, asking God to show you anything else that displeases him. Whatever the Lord shows you, write it down.

At this point, wait in silence a second time, relying on the prayer of David in Psalm 19:12, "Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults." As you wait, ask God to turn the searchlight of his truth on your soul. It will take courage to do this, but God will always answer the sincere prayer of a penitent child of God. Don't worry, you'll get a Special Delivery message from God. Whatever else God shows you, write it down.

Eventually you will come to the place where you are free of offense to both God and man. For the first time in your life, you will be able to pray with a clear conscience. Take the sheet of paper and write over it, "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from every sin" (1 John 1:7). Then take the paper and destroy it.

At that point, you are ready to ask God to fill you with the Spirit. You could pray a prayer like this: "Father, in Jesus' name I ask you to fill me with the Holy Spirit. Make me the kind of person you want me to be. Amen." That's one prayer God will always be delighted to answer. Jesus promised us that the Father would give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him (Luke 11:13).

Someone may ask if such a moral inventory is healthy. Would this not make a person too introspective? My answer is, it depends. I would not recommend doing such soul-searching every day. But from time to time, it's good to stop and do some "deep cleaning" of the soul.