

The Work of the Holy Spirit

by Charles Ewing Brown

Charles Ewing Brown preaches about the depth and complexity of the Bible and the plan of salvation, emphasizing the multiple 'office work' of the Holy Spirit. He illustrates this complexity by comparing the Holy Spirit's roles to that of a judge and a physician, showing that there is no contradiction in the various works of the Spirit. Brown delves into the symbolic representations of the Holy Spirit as air, fire, water, and oil, highlighting their significance in illustrating the Spirit's work in human life, from conviction of sin to sanctification and empowerment for witnessing.

Description

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Transcript

the-work-of-the-holy-spirit.pdf" txtUrl: "/pdf-text/text/c/charles-ewing-brown---the-work-of-the-holy-spirit.txt" thumbnailUrl: "" hasTranscript: true oneLinerSummary: "The sermon explores the multifaceted work of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers, emphasizing His roles as air, fire, water, and oil." sermonType: "topical" topics: - name: "Holy Spirit" slug: "holy-spirit" - name: "Salvation Plan" slug: "salvation-plan" bibleRefs: - text: "Genesis 1:2" bookId: "GEN" chapter: "1" verse: "2" - text: "Isaiah 6:6" bookId: "ISA" chapter: "6" verse: "6" - text: "Malachi 3:2" bookId: "MAL" chapter: "3" verse: "2" - text: "Matthew 3:11" bookId: "MAT" chapter: "3" verse: "11" - text: "John 3:2-16" bookId: "JHN" chapter: "3" verse: "2" - text: "Acts 1:8" bookId: "ACT" chapter: "1" verse: "8" - text: "Acts 2:2-3" bookId: "ACT" chapter: "2" verse: "2" outline: - heading: "I" points: - "Introduction to the Holy Spirit's Work" - "{A: 'Complexity of the plan of salvation', B: 'The Holy Spirit's multiple roles', C: 'Illustration of dual roles in professions'}" - heading: "II" points: - "The Holy Spirit as Air" - "{A: 'Symbolism of air in spiritual context', B: 'Creation of life through the Spirit', C: 'Conviction of sin and desire for God'}" - heading: "III" points: - "The Holy Spirit as Fire" - "{A: 'Symbol of cleansing and purification', B: 'Empowerment for witnessing', C: 'Misunderstandings of the Spirit's power'}" - heading: "IV" points: - "The Holy Spirit as Water" - "{A: 'Refreshing and stimulating power', B: 'Cleansing work of the Spirit', C: 'Positive upbuilding of the soul'}" - heading: "V" points: - "The Holy Spirit as Oil" - "{A: 'Symbol of anointing and authority', B: 'Significance of oil in biblical times', C: 'Anointing in the New

Testament context}" faq: - q: "What is the primary role of the Holy Spirit?" a: "The Holy Spirit serves multiple roles, including that of a sanctifier, comforter, and empowerer for witnessing." - q: "How does the Holy Spirit create life?" a: "The Holy Spirit breathes life into individuals, as seen in biblical accounts of creation and regeneration." - q: "What does fire symbolize in relation to the Holy Spirit?" a: "Fire symbolizes cleansing, purification, and the empowering presence of God in the believer's life." - q: "How is water used as a symbol of the Holy Spirit?" a: "Water represents the refreshing and cleansing work of the Holy Spirit in sanctifying the believer." - q: "What does anointing with oil signify?" a: "Anointing with oil signifies the endowment of authority and the presence of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life." quotes: - "The breath of the Almighty hath given me life." - "He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap." - "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." applicationPoints: - "Seek a deeper understanding of the Holy Spirit's work in your life." - "Embrace the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit to purify your heart." - "Recognize the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit as you witness for Christ." keywords: - "Holy Spirit" - "sanctification" - "cleansing" - "empowerment" - "anointing" - "regeneration" - "conviction" - "spiritual symbols" ---

Careless readers of the Bible have attributed to the plan of salvation a simplicity which it does not have. Just as we find depth and complexity when we attempt a close study of nature, so we likewise find many deep truths when we seek to study the Bible and the plan of salvation. One of these truths is that the Holy Spirit has more than one "office work."

This is illustrated by the case of a man who is a judge and a physician. As a physician he would seek to save a criminal's life and as a judge he might sentence him to death. There is nothing contradictory in the two offices or professions combined in one man. That is the explanation of the problem concerning Christ's promising to send his Holy Spirit when throughout the Old Testament there are numerous references to prove that he has always been in the world. Christ sent him in the special office work of the sanctifier to perfect the church on the Day of Pentecost and to dwell in it in sanctifying power forever. The multiple work of the Holy Spirit in human life is set forth in scriptural symbols and there is value in them.

AIR AS AN EMBLEM OF THE SPIRIT

When men began to talk about spiritual things they had to use physical things to illustrate their meaning. We say we grasp a subject when we mean, not that we take hold of it with the hand, but with the mind. In this way, the word air came to be used for spirit from the most ancient time. In Genesis 1:2 the Hebrew says the "ruach of God brooding on the waters." Here ruach is literally the "breath of God," and the text means that the Spirit of God brooded over the chaos of the ancient world like a bird brooding over her eggs. And this is the way that God's Spirit has brooded over the souls of all men throughout all times, from the dawn of their existence until their death, or until they had grieved him away forever, if possible. It was this Spirit of God that breathed life into the first man (Gen. 2:7). The Hebrew here says chayyim -- lives not one life, but many, all merging into one personality like many little flames merging into one bonfire.

"The breath of the Almighty hath given me life" (Job 33:4). Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live" (Ezek. 37:9). These texts indicate how the Holy Spirit works to create life, and this truth is climaxed by the teaching of Jesus concerning the work of the Spirit in producing the new birth. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.... The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:5, 8).

And so we see that the work of the Spirit is not confined to the experience of entire sanctification. In fact, the Holy Spirit begins to work with men long before they are ever converted. It is he who convicts men of sin and makes them have a desire to find God. "When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin" (John 16:8). That reproof produces what we call "conviction of sin," whenever it is heeded by the soul.

Some holiness teachers hold that the office work of the Spirit as breather of life is confined to a preparation for, and experience of, regeneration, having no place in the work of entire sanctification. But I think differently: I believe that the idea of a creative force of spiritual power is conveyed in the first record of Spirit baptism given in the second chapter of Acts. At that time, "suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting" (Acts 2:2). Some say this was merely the sound. I believe that sound was not a false appearance, but denoted the presence of the creative breath of God as it was felt on the dry bones of Ezekiel's army and upon the lifeless body of the first man. This must needs be so if our doctrine of the restoration of the divine image is correct; for it is this creative breath of the Spirit which creates anew the perfect image of God in the heart of a redeemed man, just as it created the image of God in Adam at the dawn of his existence. This is what Christ meant when he said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). This is the abundant life, imparted by the breath of God in the experience of entire sanctification.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AS FIRE

From immemorial ages the wondering eyes of simpleminded men have gazed at the mysterious movement of a flame of fire in a vain effort to explore its hidden secret. And even in this scientific age, when men know the name and meaning of the chemical change involved, they still must feel baffled by the fact that they have only given a technical description of their ignorance. Fire has seemed to all men as a fit emblem of the nature of God. Man's best friend, heating his building, cooking his food, making life possible in cold climates -- no wonder St. Francis called it Brother Fire. Fire has, nevertheless, demanded of man certain cautions and respect; for it has always been capable of striking back at him with withering power whenever he treats it lightly.

And it so happens that nearly all men who have ever believed in God have been led to think of him somewhat in the same paradoxical vein. They love him, they recognize his friendship and the benefits of his aid, and they fear him in recognition of the fact that he always holds the power to visit with stern rebuke every lack of respect that might be shown him. So it happens that throughout the Bible fire appears repeatedly as an emblem of the presence of God. The Old Testament prophets saw God in visions as "a great cloud, and a fire enfolding itself" (Ezek. 1:4). Moses saw God in a burning bush of flame (Exod. 3:2-4).

This fire teaches many truths; perhaps the most important is that of cleansing. The baptism of the Holy Spirit fell upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost as "cloven tongues like as of fire" (Acts 2:3). And the cleansing nature of this fire is set forth by Malachi: "He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness" (Mal. 3:2-3).

Nowadays gold is purified by chemical processes, but in Bible times it was purified by fire, which melted the ore together so that the dross came to the top. The dross was then skimmed off and cast aside, leaving only the pure gold, in which the workman could see his face reflected. Such is the work of Christ when he purifies hearts in the baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire. This is the fire promised in the preaching

of John: "He that cometh after me . . . shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matt. 3:11-12). This was the fire Isaiah experienced when, bewildered and humbled by the stupendous vision of God, he confessed the uncleanness of a religious man and immediately experienced purification by fire: "Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged" (Isa. 6:6-7).

Fire not only symbolizes cleansing and purity but it is also an emblem of energy and power: "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me . . . unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). A good concordance will reveal to the student very many references concerning the power of the Holy Spirit in the heart.

Many people misunderstand this power, thinking it ought to be a destructive force that shatters body and mind in some kind of hysterical shaking and insane behavior. The text just quoted will dissipate these misconceptions by showing that the principal function of the power of the Spirit is to enable one to witness for Christ; that is, witness by holy life and by faithful and persuasive words as one whose speech is "always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Col. 4:6). "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (II Tim. 1:7). Some sixteen hundred years ago, the great scholars of the church began to lay down the principle that the work of the Holy Spirit, purely and of itself, would be to strengthen and tranquilize the mind and reason. It may be that some great saint has on occasion given away to hysterical frenzy; but if so, it was a weakness of human flesh similar to that weakness to which the saints are always exposed. But the highest manifestation of the Spirit's power is in love and a sound mind. Moses talked to God face to face, but he never went into a trance. Jesus was the supreme prophet of all times, yet he did not "cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets." He was never in a trance and never for any moment did he become hysterical and display signs of insanity. He is our supreme example.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AS WATER

Many passages of the Bible set forth water as an emblem of the Holy Spirit. "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the watercourses" (Isa. 44:3-4). Here water represents the refreshing and stimulating power of the Spirit. "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:25-26). Here water represents the cleansing work of the Spirit in washing away all the remains of inbred sin.

The negative side of sanctification is that of emptying, removing, destroying the carnal mind. The positive side of sanctification involves filling the purified heart with light and love and multiplying within it the graces of the Spirit and enjoying those graces. Now so far as I can discover, this is just the significance of the two sanctifying emblems of fire and water. The fire represents purity with the idea of destruction, of consuming; water represents the idea of purity with the positive upbuilding of the soul in truth and strength and love. [39]

THE HOLY SPIRIT AS OIL

"But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him" (I John 2:27). Oil had a value to the ancients of Palestine beyond our conception in this modern day. In that age men had not learned how to preserve food for livestock so as to keep them throughout the winter. Consequently, fat meat food was considered a great luxury. Because the olive tree took many years to grow it was considered an emblem of peace. Such factors as these contributed to make any kind of oil seem much more important then than now. Perfumed oil was also esteemed a great luxury. For such reasons as these, priests and kings were anointed with oil in elaborate ceremony to signify the enduement of power and privilege which were granted by their office. Prophets, too, were anointed for the prophetic office. A book could be written upon the meaning of anointing in the Scripture. "Oil in the Old Testament appears as the symbol of the communication of the Spirit."^[40]

Even the word "Christ" simply means "anointed," as the Scriptures have said: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound" (Isa. 61:1). "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power" (Acts 10:38). The anointing of the Old Testament, therefore seems to signify the enduement of authority to rule (the king), to minister (the priest), and to teach (the prophet). Translated into the framework of New Testament ideals, this would signify the noble character of divine self-control, the capacity to lead men to God, and joyous insight into the truth; for the New Testament saints are kings and priests unto God (Rev. 1:6), and they have an anointing that teaches them.

39 G. D. Watson, *Coals of Fire*, p. 102

40 Gustav Friedrich Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament*, p. 273

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