

Holy Spirit, Church and Nations - Part 4

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon explores the role of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of light, emphasizing its transformative power in the Church and believers' lives.

Duration: 57:44

Scripture: Luke 24:27, John 5:44, John 14:16-17, John 16:13, Acts 2:4, Ephesians 1:17, Revelation 21:23

Topics: "Holy Spirit"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the transformation that occurred in the early apostles after they received the Holy Spirit. The church's mission and influence in the world were only possible when the Spirit filled them and gave them a new character. The speaker highlights the contrast between the apostles' previous state of fear and darkness and their current state of boldness and light. The importance of seeking the glory of God rather than the approval of men is also emphasized, drawing from John 5:44.

Transcript

We read a few familiar words, firstly from John's Gospel, chapter 14, and verse 16. I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Advocate, that he may be with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it beholdeth him not, neither knoweth him, ye know him. For he abideth with you, and shall be in you.

I will not leave you desolate. I come unto you. Verse 25, These things have I spoken unto you, while yet abiding with you.

But the Advocate, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you. And the fragment so well known to us, the first chapter, Letter to the Ephesians, and verse 17. I pray that the Father of glory may give unto you a Spirit of wisdom, and revelation in the knowledge of him.

In our consideration of the Holy Spirit as divine character for divine testimony, we move round to another angle this afternoon, to view him as light. It was truth last night, it was holiness this morning, now it is light. God is light.

Jesus is the light of men and of the world, it is stated. The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of revelation. God dwells in the light.

The city, which is the last presentation in the Bible, has the light of God. The word of God is a light, a lamp. Christians are said to be children of the light.

So everything related to God is light. In him there is no darkness at all. It is Satan who is the prince of darkness.

His works are the works of darkness. His children are the children of darkness. These are the two contrasted and conflicting kingdoms.

Kingdom of light, the kingdom of darkness. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of light, according to what we have just read as from the Lord Jesus. When he is come, he shall guide you into all the truth.

He shall take the things which are mine and show them unto you. So we look at the Holy Spirit as character and then as function in terms of light. God never begins to build until there is light.

The creation, before he proceeded to build, he divided the light from the darkness. He said, let there be light. That is an intimation of an abiding law, that God does all his work on the basis of light.

Those two great symbolic representations of God, the tabernacle and the temple, were the result of spiritual illumination to Moses and to David. Before they could be, light had to be given. Someone had to be the receptacle, vessel of the revelation.

When we come into the New Testament, we find that the first definite intimation of the church, I will build my church, was made immediately after the illumination had come to Peter as to the person of the Lord Jesus. Flesh and blood has not revealed it, revealed it to thee, but my Father, I will build my church. Consistency in the principle of God.

You pass from the first intimation of the church in the New Testament, first mention of the Word, to that full disclosure of its eternal calling, vocation, and destiny in this letter to the Ephesians. And you find that as in the beginning, so in the full-awed presentation, it's along the line of illumination or revelation by the Holy Spirit. Lord Jesus said, I will pray the Father.

He will give you another advocate. He shall guide you into all the truth. Not sure whether in the mind of the Lord Jesus there was the thought of the pillar, the cloud in the wilderness, guiding to the land.

May well have been. But he said, I will pray the Father. He will give you one to guide you into all the truth.

Paul is in prayer. In the same way as his Master, praying, praying. And his prayer is on the same line.

I bow my knees unto the Father. Same Father that he will grant unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. But here it is not the beginning of revelation.

That was with Peter. That is in Matthew 16. Here it's another word which has not been rightly translated in our version.

It is in the full knowledge of him. The spirit of revelation in the full knowledge of him. So we have to see, first of all, what light is.

If so much depends upon it. So much rests upon it. It is a bit like one of the pillars upon which the whole structure of the Church rests.

It is important that we know what it is. Firstly, as to character. Well, light is transparency.

Light is clearness. Light is absolute purity. Light is honesty.

Light is openness of character. Light hides nothing. It does not believe in hiding anything.

Its whole action and nature is contrary to hiding anything. It has nothing to hide. It shows everything.

It shows all. That is, in other words, it is not deceitful. It does not want to cover anything or make pretense or belief that something is other than it is.

Light is single. It is not double. There is no duplicity about light.

Light is just light. There is no darkness at all where there is light. Now we have pointed out that the city, which as we so well know, is one of the titles or designations of Christ Corporate, Christ and his members, the Church, is characterized by everything that speaks of the nature of light.

It is characterized as a whole by crystal clearness. It is like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. Its streets are pure, that is, transparent gold, if ever you have seen transparent gold.

Its river is water, clear as crystal. Everything about it is of the nature of light. It is so much light in its character that it has no need of the sun.

The light is in its own constitution. It takes its character from the Lamb, who is the light thereof. You can see through this city and everything in it.

I don't know whether you would like to live in transparent houses, but when you live in this city to adopt the figure or the symbol, you won't be ashamed for anybody to see what's going on. You won't need to hide anything. Well, you can just see through it.

All the sins which produces cloudiness and murkiness, indefiniteness, and mists and clouds and all that sort of thing, that sin will have been finally abolished. There will be no night there. No night there.

All these things as you recognize are symbolic terms, symbolic things. It shows symbolically what the Holy Spirit has come to do in men and women and in the creation. That is what he has come to do, to make for a condition like that in human nature.

He's undertaken a tremendous task. That is what he has come to do, is the Spirit of Light, that is his character and his presence, is on the one side to bring everything to an end that is of the nature of darkness. All these various shades of darkness, aspects of darkness, including, as you see, a whole vocabulary of words, come to bring all that to an end by applying the cross in which it was all brought to an end in the person of the Lord Jesus.

To work that meaning of the cross out in our lives so that everything that belongs to that kingdom of darkness is removed. In the end, with us, there is no darkness. Is that really what we think of when we think of having, receiving, being filled with the Holy Spirit? Here again, perhaps a little reshaping of our idea is called for.

It is true that he is many other things. He is the Spirit of Power. He is the Spirit of Wisdom.

Yes, he is many other things, but with them all he is this. We must not make more of those demonstration aspects of the Spirit in power and gifts and capacities and works than we do of the character side of the Holy Spirit. If, dear friends, he is going to really do his work in you and in me, what he will do is to bring us to be people who can be looked into without any fear, without any drawing of the blind, just be looked into.

We can bear to be looked into. Our lives can bear to be looked into. Our motives can bear to be looked into.

The Holy Spirit knows us. He knows us. We cannot deceive him.

We cannot hoodwink him as we say. He knows us. His dealings with us are with a knowledge that we have not got about ourselves.

We must, therefore, give the Holy Spirit credit for dealing with us according to a knowledge of us that is beyond our own. He has seen something that is contrary to his own nature. He has, looking in, found something that does not answer to this character of absolute transparency.

He's dealing with it. You see, we often think that sincerity, sincerity on our part is all that is required. We've only got to be sincere.

We say we are sincere. I'd remind you that in any case there's a difference between sincerity and reality. But Saul of Tarsus was the most sincere man alive in his day.

He was the most mistaken man alive in his day. Sincerity may be required. It may be very important, and it is.

But don't let us deceive ourselves with our sincerity. Say that because we are downright sincere then we must be right. That is not the case.

Spirit may require sincerity to open the door. But I believe that anything that is insincere is a closed door to the Holy Spirit. But it after all is only opening the door for him to come in and then begin to show us that sincere as we were, we were wrong after all.

We were wrong after all. That is exactly what happened, isn't it, with Paul. I verily thought that I ought to do many things contrary to this way.

I verily thought that I ought to do. Absolutely sincere, absolutely conscientious, and yet most ignominiously mistaken until a light came. Then he saw it.

You see the point. The Holy Spirit does not just accept our sincerity as the everything. He comes perhaps through that door.

Then he begins his work, showing that even our purest motives were probably mixed. Our most sincere intentions were tainted. He works according to his knowledge, and we must give him credit always for doing that, for doing that.

Dear friends, if you and I are really, really meaning business with God, and the Holy Spirit has taken us through an experience, through a death, which has been very self-revealing, and a real shock to us as to what was there that we would never have believed had we been told, the end of that is we are on our faces worshipping him as the faithful and the true. Not rebellion, not bitterness, but thanking God that he

has been so faithful with us, and so true, so true. We don't want to be let off doing anything that is darkness at all.

Well, this is the first thing about the Holy Spirit as light he is, and works for complete transparency and honesty and purity without a shadow, to bring us to that end of glory, having the glory of God, because there can be no glory in anything that is of the kingdom of darkness. Another thing about light is that it is absolutely fearless. Light is fearless.

If this character is really there, we're never afraid of something being discovered. A good conscience, a clear conscience, is a tremendously courageous thing. It's a very strong thing.

Puts you in a very strong position. And where it is light, and there is no darkness, nothing to be hidden, and therefore nothing that we do not want to be discovered or uncovered. There is no fear.

There is no fear. There is the great strength of confidence and assurance. Light is a fearless thing.

Anything doubtful, anything doubtful or questionable about which we are not sure, we are not sure as to whether our position is right or wrong, if we've got some question, we're always afraid. We're in the weakness of fear, are we not? It's like this. Darkness and fear always go together, don't they? Naturally, it's like that.

Fear belongs to darkness. No confidence, no strength where there is darkness. This city, this people, at the end is such a strong city.

Having walls great and high, it is the very embodiment of the idea of strength. But its strength lies in its character. Its strength lies in its purity, its light.

It's cannot exist where there is light. Well, we know that physically, do we not? We send people with certain diseases to the country where it's all sunny and light. We have learned to expose our wounds to the sun for their healing.

Disease cannot abide the light. The light is healing. Light is purified.

Now, come back to the city, Gaines says, and the leaves of the tree are for the health of the nation. Disease cannot abide this light that is in the city. It just cannot abide the light that is there.

The light deals with everything that is working corruption and destroys it. It repairs the damage. I'm thinking especially now of the more recent discoveries and uses of light in the healing.

I remember how it began. In the First World War, I had a great deal to do with wounded soldiers. Thousands of terribly mangled bodies, torn by shell.

And it was then in that war, when it was so difficult to cope with this terrible situation, that the method of healing and even making good the loss of flesh, repairing the destroyed tissues, the method was adopted then of putting the wounded out in the sun. Just exposing them to the sun. Marvelous what the sun did.

Built up the bodies. Made good the destroyed tissues. It healed in a wonderful way.

That was the introduction of a new technique, which is now, of course, resolved, being resolved into the various kinds of ways for healing. Light does it. Light does it.

It's healing. It's repairing. It destroys disease.

Another thing, and we're building up for an application, another thing about light is that it is a joyful thing. It's a joyful thing. It's an uplifting thing.

It's an inspiring thing. Darkness is always depressing, isn't it? Always depressing. Well, you can see in the very physique of people in this world, those people who live in those extreme northern realms, where they don't see the sun from one year's beginning to another, they are shriveled, they are heavy, they are dull, they are very largely joyless people.

Whereas when you go to the southern climes, what a difference. Laughter, merriment, lightheartedness. Light has that effect, fulfills that ministry.

People of the sun are sunny people. People of the shadows are marked by, oh no, an important thing is light, isn't it? In character. Very important thing in character.

Before ever the function can begin, you've got to have the character. That's the point. You see, the Church, the Church, before ever the function can begin, you've got to have the character.

That's the point. You see, the Church, the Church broke out on its great world mission and challenged darkness everywhere when the Holy Spirit himself had come into it and given his own character to it. You can see the contrast in those early chapters of the Church's history.

Tremendous contrast. In the apostles themselves, oh, what a change has taken place in them, what different men they are. They were men in the shadows, in the dark, but they're now men in the light, or shall I say, men with the light in themselves.

Something has transformed those men. They're changed. The light is in them.

Here it has come, take those two representative on the Emmaus road, what a veil was over their eyes as to the Scriptures. When the Lord Jesus opened up the Scriptures of the Old Testament from Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms, that was not their introduction to the Bible. They knew the Scriptures.

They knew the Bible. They were not just being introduced to the book, but how dark their minds were. Now listen to them on the day of Pentecost.

What light they've got as to the Scriptures. They now are seeing and are proclaiming wonderful illumination. Out of the Scriptures, the light has come into them.

It has changed them, made them different people, a different kind of people, hardly recognized them as the same people in many respects. You cannot recognize the old Simon Peter, can you, in this man that is now standing up and speaking and challenging everybody. Couldn't stand up to the challenge of a little maid only a little while before, but now he can challenge the ruler.

Something's happened to this man. The light has come in. Something has been done.

In other words, the Spirit has come into him, and he is now seeing in new ways. That's how the testimony begins. That's how the function begins.

See, the Holy Spirit is the spirit of the work, of the world testimony, of the testimony in the nations. But dear friends, the Holy Spirit is not just out to make us retailers of truth in a second-hand way. That is just one of the weaknesses of the whole order.

Certain things are learned or taught in schools, and then people are sent out with what they have learned in schools, have been taught, and they go out and they give that out in this second-hand phonographic way. Not surprised that there's not the impact upon the darkness that there was at the beginning, and that the healing of spiritual and moral diseases does not take place, and the host's pain is transformed. No, it's not that way.

This is why the Lord Jesus, after they had all the information that ever they needed, they had had all his teachings, they had seen all his works, they had seen him die, they had seen him after the resurrection, and they had heard angels from heaven declaring that he would come again in like manner as they had seen him go out. And yet they're not allowed to go and preach. Yet they are not allowed to go out into the nation.

With all that, this thing has got to become something more than something said to them, something that they have been told, something that they have heard with their ears. This has got to come into them by the Holy Spirit as a mighty power within their own being. Hence, he gave them commandment that they should not depart from Jerusalem until they receive the promise.

No, it is not the truth that we have been taught. It is the truth that has come into our hearts by illumination of the Holy Spirit that is powerful, not any other. Most important, I venture to say, dear friends, that if only a small percentage of all the teachings that this little company represents were to come up in the power of the Holy Spirit, some tremendous thing would happen.

There would be an impact and registration that would be comparable to what was at the beginning. Just wonderful. Let us not be content with our truth and our teaching.

The Lord made it perfectly clear that that was not all that they required. Much as he had given, and much as he had shown, much as they had come by in their association with him, he made it perfectly clear, this is not enough, and you must not go out into the world just with that. That must not be the basis on which you go.

That will come to life, that has its place, that is necessary, but you cannot just go on with that only. Carry ye until ye be endued with power. And when the endowment came, what happened? It was what he had said to them that sprang into life.

It was what he had done that came to them as a new revelation as to what it meant. Holy Spirit is absolutely indispensable even when you have a very, very large wealth of instruction, of teaching, of information. This is true as to the individual, but remember that the Holy Spirit is the light of the sanctuary.

Paul prays about this spirit of wisdom and revelation. He has the church before him. He is thinking of the church as the dwelling place, the habitation, as he calls it, of God through the Spirit.

It's the church which is to be here in this world, universally and locally, as this powerful impact upon the darkness in that locality or wherever it is by the Holy Spirit. The darkness cannot go unchallenged, cannot go unchallenged, and it cannot eventually triumph. He said of the Lord Jesus, He was the light, and the light was in Him, and the darkness overcame it not.

It looked as though it did, but it didn't. It didn't. The presence of the church with the Holy Spirit within ought to be like that.

It ought to be like that, registering a tremendous challenge, and whatever, whatever men do or Satan does, that light is not quenched. That light survives. It should be like that.

You and I, individually, when we have passed from this earth, should be remembered for having been vehicles of light, vehicles of light, vessels of light, this kind of light. It was a challenge which was healing, which was effective, not just that we had teachings and that we had truth, but there was that with the Holy Spirit in it that left a mark. We all ought to be like that.

Do you think it's possible for anybody really, really to have the Holy Spirit in any commensurate way and for it to make no difference where they are? Surely that could not be. That could not be. He said of the Lord Jesus that He could not be here.

He could not be here. So it should be with us. Now this is the truth about the Holy Spirit as light, and I'm quite sure you agree with the truth, and that your heart goes out that it might be so in your case.

It may be necessary for us to give the Holy Spirit a better and larger chance than He has. We can, you know, shut out the light. We can deprive ourselves of this light of the Spirit.

We can have bandages over our eyes. What might they be? Well, prejudice is a terribly blinding thing, you know. What is prejudice? Well, it means, as the word clearly indicates, that you have prejudged something, a situation, before you really did look into it.

Prejudice, perhaps on the basis of report, on any one of many precepts, prejudice. And in prejudging without a first-hand honest, sincere, through investigation and inquiry, suing this matter, till you really know, you're closed down, foreclosed on it. Very well, you have put the bandage of prejudice on your eyes.

There's no hope until that is removed. There is no hope until that is removed. Some of us know that quite well.

My brethren know that it was just on that very, very point, many years ago, the whole thing turned in my life from what I call a closed heaven to an open heaven. At least one brother was there one Sunday morning when I was preaching, and I was preaching on prejudice. And, well, some people think that I can be emphatic, but I was emphatic that day.

Metaphorically, I had my coat off and my sleeves up, and I was lunging at prejudice with all the strength that I had, calling it by all the names that my vocabulary would provide, saying it was the cruel thing, it was the thing that gave neither man nor God a chance, and so I went on. Well, that was that. That was the Lord's Day morning.

Tuesday morning, I was in my study. A letter was handed to me in which I was invited to attend a certain conference, and if I would attend, all my expenses would be paid, traveling, and while I was there, and I looked, and I said, no, not on your life. You'll never find me there.

I wouldn't touch that with a 40-foot barge boat, and I took out my diary, quite sure that in those very busy days, of course, I would have my answer. I would have other engagements. When I looked in my diary,

the only dates that were free were those very days, and I left it on my desk in the living area.

Now, how am I going to get around this? What am I going to do about this? Very kind of them to this person to offer me all my expenses. What am I to say? While I was trying to find my way out, my back door, my wife came in with my morning cup of something, and she saw that I was a bit disturbed, a bit worried, and she asked me about it, and I told her what it was, and she said, well, I have you any engagements at that time? I said, no, just at that time I have none. Oh, she said, well, it looks to me as though you have one of two alternatives.

I would tell them you will not go or go, because that's the value of having a practical wife. I was left with that. She went out.

As I began to think about this again, it was as though someone stood at the side of me. I didn't see anybody, and I didn't hear any voice, but it was as though someone stood beside me and said, what about your sermon on prejudice? Oh, well, I had to face that whole thing before God. Now, the issue is this, that it was just that that brought a great turning point in my life, opened the way for the Lord for something very much more.

I came into an altogether new place with the Lord by dealing with that whole spirit of prejudice. You can understand how afraid I am of prejudice, what it can do, how it can close the door, or to return to my figure, how it can put a bandage over the eyes that we will be deprived of what the Lord wants to give. Yes, prejudice, pride, pride, unwillingness to humble ourselves, unwillingness to say we've been wrong, to take something back.

Crime, it can blind. Perhaps there are a few things more blinding than pride. Policy, policy, you can just shut the Holy Spirit right out if you're going to be governed by policy.

That is, taking into account how it will affect you and your interest and what other people will think that if you do this or that you'll be a speckled bird, you'll be regarded as so-and-so, you see. Secondary considerations, how it will affect you and your future. Perhaps closed doors to you.

Oh, that's, that's a hobgoblin of the devil to rob you of something. Yes, it will blind. He won't go on if there's any, any policy about it.

Make no mistake about it. I've often been tremendously impressed, yes, and it's been, so I may say it, a guiding principle in my own spiritual life, which I have tried to be faithful. There's words in John 5, 44, how can ye believe which receive glory one from another, and do not seek the glory which comes from God only? How can ye believe? See, that, that whole nation and those Jewish rulers and leaders and teachers were shut out of all that Christ came to give on this one thing, policy, thinking more of the glory of men than the glory of God, walking more as before men than before the Lord.

If Abraham has a great inheritance, and there's no doubt that he has, the covenant of promise concerning his seed, which seed is Jesus Christ. What an inheritance! Remember, remember that the covenant was made with Abraham at the point where God appeared unto him and said, I am the Lord all sufficient. Walk before me, and be thou first.

Walk before me, and be thou first. That's the way, the enlarging inheritance, before me, not before men, not before systems, not before public opinions, and not before your own interests, how they're going to be served and what's going to happen to you. Walk before me, and be thou first.

I am the Lord all sufficient, all sufficient. How can ye believe which receive glory from one another, and do not seek the glory which comes from God only? This is the way of life, the way of power, the way of the Spirit, the way of walking in the light as he is in the light, and walking with the light in ourselves. Now you can, of course, see how all that relates to the Church's witness in this world.

You can understand a lot in the light of day, when the Church was filled with the light of the Spirit. Oh, what an effect it had upon the kingdom of darkness, everywhere. But when the Church began to lose that basis of life, it began to lose its influence in the world.

The Lord save us. Shall we pray?

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