

## The person and work of the Holy Spirit

### Part One: Sunday 14th June

A number of people in our family at Whiteknights Church have felt for some time how very important it is for us all to know and understand the person and work of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in the life of our church. So, having felt encouraged by the Lord to share last Sunday and make a start on considering this theme, I bring you some thoughts. Hopefully they are simple to understand but profound and significant for our lives.

The Holy Spirit is of course a person - one equal to God the Father and God the Son and, vitally, the One Who has been commissioned with continuing the work of Jesus and His Father on the earth today. There are some clues in the bible to the Spirit's importance and role. Often these clues are found as illustrations in peoples' lives or spoken pictures. For instance Jesus spoke of Him as being like the wind, unseen, powerful and ever present. This chimes with the first indication of Him in the bible, right at the very beginning, when He is active in creation (Genesis 1: 2 ...*the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters*). This verse allows us to understand that the Holy Spirit is active in and over each of our lives.

One of the illustrations of the Holy Spirit that is demonstrated in a person's life is to be found in Genesis chapter 24, when Abraham commissions his servant to find a wife for his son Isaac, which the servant duly does. It's a long and richly special story that indicates the servant nature of the Holy Spirit in gathering people throughout the ages into the Church. (The Church is frequently referred to as the bride of Christ). The Holy Spirit loves nothing more than to find, enlighten and enrich those people even today who love, worship and give their lives to Jesus Christ.

Another expression of the Holy Spirit as found in a person is to be seen in the story of Caleb, one of the twelve spies sent by Moses to spy out the land of Canaan. As you may recall, when the spies returned to Moses and the people, (and despite the richness of the land), ten of them were conscious only of the problems - giants of men that made them feel like grasshoppers. (Numbers 13:33). This caused the people to weep and wish even to go back to Egypt, where they had been in slavery.

It was Joshua and Caleb only who were possessed with the faith to believe God when He said He would give the people the land that they were to enter and possess. They were of a different spirit to the other spies, (Numbers 14:24) so, though merely men, we can appreciate them as types (examples) of God.

Joshua is a type of Christ: Joshua led the next generation of God's people into the land, (the promised land), that they were to inherit, he fought for it and claimed it, just as Christ has fought for, died for and been victorious for the inheritance which is for each of us from God the Father.

Caleb was the only other person of that generation to enter into the promised land and possess it. A translation of his name is 'bold' - a real warrior of a man - and his testimony as recorded in the bible is of one who is full of faith and the ability and determination to possess what God had promised to him. He was a leader of men (Numbers 13:2) and, If we allow it, he is a wonderful picture of who the Holy Spirit is and what he (the Spirit) can be to us and do for us! We all need a Joshua (Jesus) and a Caleb (the Holy Spirit) in our lives!

So what more does the story of Caleb demonstrate to us of the nature and person of the Holy Spirit. Well, there are some further clues in chapters 13 and 14 of the book of Numbers: 13:30 says that *Caleb quieted {or stilled} the people*. It is common to most, if not all of us, to have times of anxiety and fear, when our heart and mind are in turmoil, as was the case here with the people of God after the disturbing report of the ten spies. But, just as Caleb quieted the people, so for us the Holy Spirit can quieten our hearts and bring us to rest and stillness even in the midst of the severest of trials. So much so that we can come to that place where we are able to hand it all over to God. This should be the tenor of our life. As the writer of the book of Hebrews encourages us we

must *strive to enter that {God's} rest* (Hebrews 4:11). It is something we have to **choose** to do. It won't always be easy, it may not at first come naturally, but with the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit it can cause our hearts to soar and sing in praise for His faithfulness, despite what is going on around us. The benefits to our soul are immense!

The rewards of faith are great. It says of Caleb that he followed God fully **{he wholly followed the Lord}**, (Numbers 14:24). Half-heartedness should not be a trait of the church. Wholeheartedness is the disposition of the Holy Spirit and, tempered with wisdom, it becomes a distinguishing mark of those who love the Lord. It was Jesus who, when replying to the question 'which is the great commandment?' said: '*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind.*' Wonderfully challenging words, but the Holy Spirit within us can fulfil this promise!

The outworking of this wholeheartedness are significant. For Caleb the promise and the reward was to be brought, (alongside Joshua), into the land which God had promised His people and for him to settle there. For us the promise is that the Holy Spirit will bring each of us into the spiritual inheritance that God the Father has purposed and planned for us and for which Jesus has died and risen victoriously to win and secure on our behalf. As the apostle Paul put it when he wrote to the Ephesian church: *...you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit Who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it.* (Ephesians 1:13-14)

Moving on some forty- five years in Caleb's story, and into the book of Joshua, we find another interesting example of the Holy Spirit's work and activity in us: God's people have finally entered the land and Caleb passionately reminds Joshua, (who is now the leader), of the oath that Moses swore to him. It was strong in him **to hold Joshua to the promise** made to him all those years before: So, he cries, ***give me this mountain*** of which the Lord spoke on that day (verse 12).

This is such a clear illustration of the Holy Spirit's ability to bring us to that place where only He, (and all He promises to us), satisfies our deepest desires and meets our deepest needs. It's a bold thing to say that the interceding, (that is passionate praying on our behalf), of **the Holy Spirit within us holds God to His promises**. It's not that the Father is in anyway reluctant to give us what He has promised, but rather that **we become earnestly engaged with Him** to give us what He has promised us In Christ Jesus. This is very real praying, and powerful and life changing - and truly dynamic for the church! The need is for us as a church to pray like this!!

A further illustration of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives can be seen in Caleb's capture of Kiriath-Arba - 'the city of Arba'. One translation of the name Arba is 'strength of baal' and it clearly was a **stronghold** of the cult of baal. (The word baal means 'master' or 'possessor'). Kiriath - Arba was where the three sons of Anak resided. The Anakim were formidable - giants of men. But the account says of Caleb: *Caleb drove out from there the three sons of Anak* (Joshua 15:14).

Our hearts can be encouraged in that however formidable we may think the 'giants' who once mastered our life were, they need master us no longer! They are no match for the Spirit of the Lord. With our co-operation they can be mastered - and remain so! We have a new master! (It is interesting to note that Kiriath - Arba was renamed Hebron, which was to become a city of refuge and the residence for some of the descendants of Aaron, the high priest.

How encouraging it is to think that for us today the Holy Spirit in our lives can change the root and fibre of our being. Sin and its outworking is not to have the mastery any longer. Rather our lives must be the place, (the temple), where the very essence and fragrance of the Lord's nature and life can (and must) reside: in the three strongholds of our spirit, our soul and our mind. The Holy Spirit is just so wonderful in doing this for us!

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