

Monday, June 8, 2009

They say “blood is thicker than water”, meaning family kinship connects people much closer than anything else. In our day, sadly, many families don’t feel that closeness. In our Scripture reading today, John 15 describes a closeness with God that is almost unimaginable . . . a grape vine. The stem, the branches, the leaves, the fruit . . . all so closely connected, the vitality of life produces “fruit that will last”! In Walworth County, late spring/early summer is still in “full bloom” as vegetation is coming to life all around us, thus it shouldn’t be difficult for us to understand what Jesus is talking about. But here’s the question . . . in Jesus’ picture of vine/branches . . . what’s the life power? What keeps us connected to God and what power produces the fruit? Answer: The Holy Spirit of God!!

As you know, John 13-17 began in the upper room the night Jesus was betrayed in the garden. It is possible Jesus held a cluster of grapes from the table as he spoke John 15, or maybe they left the upper room after John 14 (note the last verse) and John 15, 16, 17 were spoken in the courtyard area of the house where there may have been some grape vines. Either way, the intimacy and intensity of these chapters are unparalleled in Jesus’ teachings while on earth. It is here He first explains to His friends, that God would send HIS Holy Spirit to them! Yes, the Holy Spirit IS God!

John 14:16 “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor – the Spirit of Truth.” Jesus had repeatedly used the phrase “I tell you the truth”. He even claimed to be “the living truth” (John 14:6). He had been an ever-present “counselor” for these men. Now, Jesus was speaking clearly about His death, His departure. It frightened them. Read John 14 again, and note how Jesus is comforting the men with the promise of the Holy Spirit of God as their truthful counselor! Do you trust the Holy Spirit as a Truthful Counselor, an “Anchor for Your Soul” in the storms of life?

Tuesday, June 9, 2009

Do you struggle with the concept of infinity? God, of course, exists in the context of infinite time, infinite space, infinite power, infinite love, etc . . . can you grasp it?

Do you understand God: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ), God the Holy Spirit . . . three persons yet one God? It’s called “the trinity”. God is a “triune God”. An example for you might be . . . YOU. You are at one and the same time, the child of your parents / the employee of your business / a part of Calvary Church. Three very different roles . . . yet one person. You think, feel, and function differently in each role (visiting your parents / at work / in worship), yet what if you could be in all three places, fully exercising your full role in each place, all at the same time? Get the idea? That’s a picture of the “Trinity”.

God the Holy Spirit is a vital part of the fullness of God. “He” . . . yes, the Holy Spirit is a personality, is God and thus has been, is, and will be fully engaged with all God is and does for all eternity. Genesis 1:2 says “the Holy Spirit was hovering above the waters” when God began the creation process. When God designed and created mankind (Gen. 1:26) the Holy Spirit was actively involved (“let Us make man in Our image”). Noah “walked with God” (Gen. 6:9) and I believe that describes the intimate relationship between Noah and the Holy Spirit of God. Joseph was given the Spirit of God to interpret the Pharaoh’s dreams (Gen. 41). God filled Moses with His Spirit, and then placed His Holy Spirit on the Elders to help Moses lead 2 million people (Numbers 11). “The Holy Spirit came upon David in power”, Samuel records for us in 1 Samuel 16:13.

The Holy Spirit was very, very active through the history of humanity as recorded in the Bible. Today, you’ve read John 16, do you see the references to the Holy Spirit? What specific things do you see that Jesus explained to His disciples about the person and work of the Holy Spirit?

Wednesday, June 10, 2009

How do you measure power? A lightning bolt could light up a city with all its electrical power if captured. The Hoover Dam holds back millions of gallons of water. New Orleans is still cleaning up more than three years later, from hurricane Katrina. The powerful explosions on the surface of the sun are similar to billions of nuclear bombs, and give heat and light to us 93 million miles away!

Jesus said “you will receive POWER when the Holy Spirit comes upon you . . .” (Acts 1:8). A short while later, He was gone (we’ll consider Jesus’ ascension and heavenly reign as another anchor for your soul next weekend), and His friends felt helpless, vulnerable, aimless . . . until suddenly, in the middle of their worship, ten days later, the Holy Spirit came upon them in power (Acts 2)!! These ordinary people began speaking in languages they had never studied, and perhaps never heard! That’s miraculous power! Please note, it was for a particular purpose . . . Acts 2:5-12. Can you discern what God’s larger strategic plan was in this remarkable power demonstration? Do you see the result was 3000 people who became convinced Jesus was the Christ and trusted what the Disciples were telling them, and were baptized that day (Acts 2:41)!

Note in our Scripture reading today, John 17, Jesus prays that God would “protect them from the evil one” (vs. 15). Do you understand Satan, the evil one, has a profound hatred for God, God’s plans and purposes, God’s people, and anything that evidences God in our world? This protection Jesus prayed for is in part, the powerful Holy Spirit protecting us from demonic forces, from Satanic strategies. Consider 1 Peter 5:8, or Ephesians 6:10-18 and John 8:44. Now, look closely at our world and consider 1 John 5:19. What evidence do you see of the “evil one” working his demonic purpose to denounce God, distract us from God, defeat God in your life? Is the Holy Spirit protecting you?

Thursday, June 11, 2009

Have you ever been part of a “movement” that achieved something significant, or made a significant impact in that moment in history? Maybe it was a winning team, or a remarkable business year, or a great family heritage, or a great church? May I suggest the first few chapters of Acts depict one of the most amazing “movements” in all human history? In a few weeks the city of Jerusalem was turned upside down, as more than 5000 people (Acts 4:4) believed the friends of Jesus and the Holy Spirit changed their lives. Within months, the word had spread to nearby cities and towns (Acts 8-10) and before long, the Holy Spirit led movement had caused such a stir, a new name was invented to describe the people in this powerful movement sweeping across the Middle East . . . Christians, they were called! Acts 11 tells us that name was first used in Antioch . . . the remarkable city from which the movement went international (Acts 13)! What made such a difference that even the power of Rome couldn't stop its influence across the Roman Empire? The Holy Spirit!

Please note this inaugural coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:2-4 has never been repeated. However, every person who trusts Jesus Christ to be their Savior experiences the same Holy Spirit coming into their life in a similar, powerful, life transforming way. Your salvation experience is unique to you, thus the arrival and work of the Holy Spirit into your life is unique to your relationship with God!! (Did you get that?) For some it may be sudden freedom from alcohol or drugs or pornography. For others it may be peace as fear subsides, or joy as guilt and shame evaporate, or hope as despair disappears. When the Holy Spirit of God comes into your life He births a new spiritual nature in you (John 3:3-7); cleanses you from sin (1 John 1:9) and starts changing you into a God honoring person (Romans 8). It's a life long transformation of spiritual growth. Is it happening in you? What's your evidence?

Friday, June 12, 2009

Because the Holy Spirit is one of the most powerful anchors for your soul, I urge you to take a close look this summer at the early chapters of Acts and trace the tangible evidence of what the Holy Spirit accomplished in changing the world in the first century! Then consider what is happening in our day as more than 80,000 people come to Christ everyday in our world, while 400 daily are dying as courageous martyrs! If you'll look closely, you will see there is no power on earth which compares to the power of the Holy Spirit unleashed in the lives of normal people like us!

In the months following Jesus' departure from earth, His friends could not have felt more alone. Jesus was gone and they faced the anger of those who had killed Jesus. Acts 4 is one of those first fearful encounters as Peter and John stood face to face in the same “courtroom” with the same religious leaders who had condemned Jesus to death only weeks earlier! Can you imagine their fear? Yet, look at the power of the Holy Spirit unleashed in them . . . Acts 4:1-20. That's courage, would you agree?

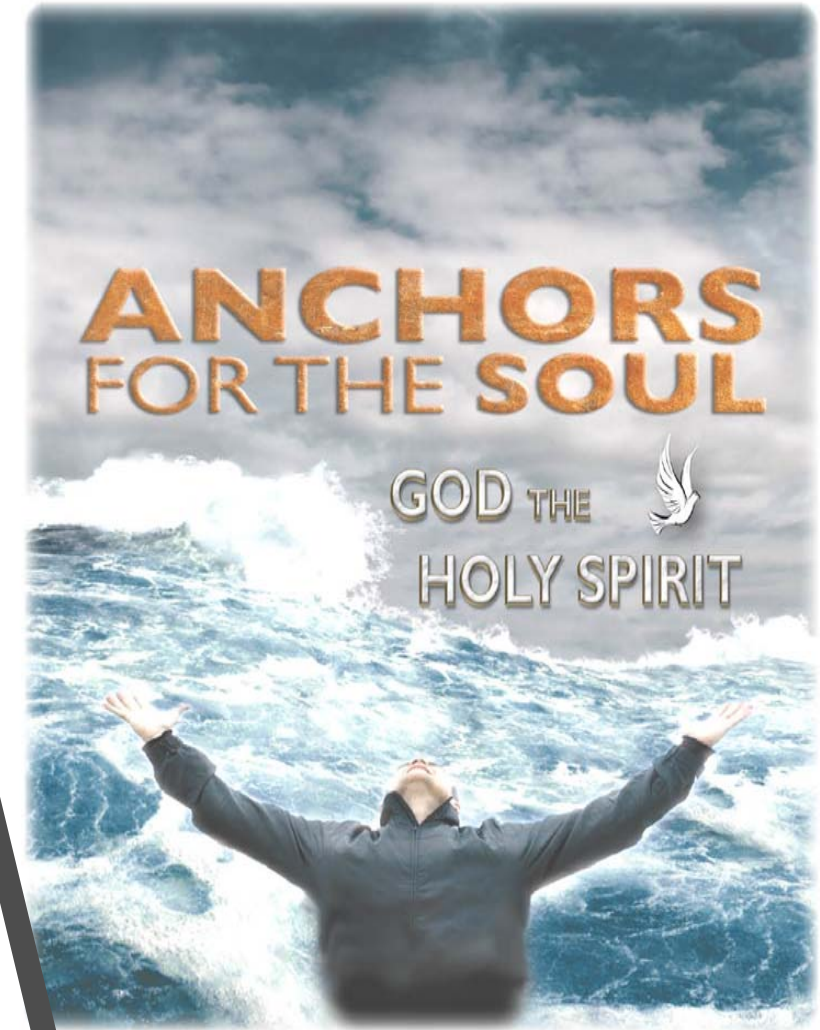
What's the most powerful prayer meeting you've ever been in? Try Acts 4:31 . . . the Holy Spirit actually shook the building! Later in Acts 12, the Holy Spirit responded to another prayer meeting and sent an angel to free Peter from prison!

Sometimes power is seen best in humble service, would you agree? Acts 6:1-7 is an example of Holy Spirit power unleashed on men “filled with the Holy Spirit and Wisdom” as they served the widows of their day. Perhaps power in death, especially martyrdom is the ultimate Holy Spirit power. Stephen was the first of millions, and his story is Acts 7. Note the Holy Spirit sustained him to his final breath! Now . . . what about you? Have you earnestly asked God to fill you with the POWER of the Holy Spirit? Have you renounced anything in your life that would counter the work, the presence and Holiness of the Holy Spirit?



Pastor Doug Anderson

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