HC LD 20; John 16:5-15; John 14:15-31; I Believe the Holy Spirit I. The Teaching of the Spirit II. The Presence of the Spirit III. The Fruit of the Spirit

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the three persons of the Trinity, the identity of the Holy Spirit is the one most confused today. Many of the early church creeds dealt with the person and work of Jesus Christ, but it seems that the Holy Spirit was not discussed much in the early creeds. In fact, some have said that the Holy Spirit is forgotten or neglected in our own Creeds and Confessions. For example, when reading the HC, you will note that the study of God the Father has 2 Lord’s Days, God the Son has 9 Lord’s Days, and the Holy Spirit only has 1 LD dedicated to it. Does that mean that the HS is unimportant to the HC? Not at all! When reading the HC, we have already found the Holy Spirit in 11 of the first 20 Lord’s Days. So about half of Lord’s Days have deal with the HS so far. Now the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of God or the Spirit of Christ- the comforter, helper or “Paraclete.” As the other helper sent from Christ- proceeding from the Father and the Son- it sometimes said that the Holy Spirit is the “shy” member of the Trinty. Perhaps that is a fair statement- because as we will see, the work of the Spirit is to point to and apply the work of Jesus Christ. In the OT, the Holy Spirit was given at specific times and usually to equip for specific service. Kings and prophets were said to have the Holy Spirit fall upon them. But in the church today, the Holy Spirit is poured out on all of God’s people- anointing us all to be prophets, priests and kings. So today we consider the person and work of the Holy Spirit. We are coming to the 3rd section of the AC- which is God the Spirit and our sanctification. With this theme: Jesus Christ pours out His Spirit upon the church for the equipping of the saints.

**I. The Teaching of the Spirit**

You will note that the title of our sermon is that I believe the Holy Spirit! Those who are jointed to Christ by faith will in fact trust, believe and accept what the Spirit teaches and says! But what does the Spirit teach- where does the Spirit speak? In our first point, we look at the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. Look at what Jesus taught about the work of the Spirit in John 14:26. The helper or the Holy Spirit will teach you all things and bring to mind all that I said to you. The fact is, congregation, God does speak today! His message is clear and true! And the way in which God speaks to us is specifically linked to the work of the Holy Spirit! But what is the content of this word? Well, Jesus says that the content of the Spirit’s word is in fact the words and works of Jesus! The Spirit applies the Word- the Bible to us! And by the Spirit we can say- God has told me what is true because the Spirit has opened my eyes to what the Bible says! In other words, the Spirit leads us into truth as He applies God’s Word to us! The ministry of the Spirit is to point to Christ- to cause us to remember what Jesus did and taught. There is a specific and definite direction that is evident here. When Jesus was on the earth, He spoke of and for the Father. See John 14:24. The words of Jesus were the words that the Father gave Him. And now, when we come to the Holy Spirit, we find that the words of the Spirit are in fact the words of Jesus. So the Spirit points to Jesus as Jesus pointed to the Father. The persons of the Trinity do not speak separately or in competition- they speak in unity and they speak corporately! In fact- as John 16:14 affirms- the Spirit’s work is to glorify the Son and take what the Son has and declare it to us! Just as Jesus glorified the Father, so now the Spirit glorifies Jesus! It is for this reason that the Spirit has sometimes been called the shy member of the Trintiy. This is because the Spirt does not speak alone nor does He point to Himself- He speaks the words of Jesus and points us to Jesus- so that we might glorify Jesus! The Spirit is the Spirit of truth- 14:17 says. If Jesus is the way, the truth and the life- then the Spirit is the Spirit of truth because He points us to Jesus! So we can be very specific here. What does the Spirt teach us? Well, the content of the Spirit’s teaching is basically law and gospel. The Spirit convicts us of our sins- John 16:8- convicting concerning our sins. And the Spirit enables us to know the good news- to love God and to keep His commandments. He is the Spirit of truth! John 14:15- if you love God you will keep His commandments. The Spirit is the one who helps or enables us to know, love and obey. So any teaching about the Spirit’s work that separates the Spirit from the Son misses the whole point. The Spirit of Christ points us to Christ! Brings the words and works of Christ to mind- applying them to our hearts and lives! This is how He teaches us! We can know for sure that what we read in the Bible is truly God’s Word because the Spirit uses the Word. So we come to know Jesus as the Spirit applies His work and word to us! Through the Scriptures and the Preaching, we can know God rightly! See Jesus clearly! For this is the will and work of the Holy Spirit!

**II. The Presence of the Spirit**

So the first specific work of the Spirit is to teach us- to bring to remembrance all that Jesus said and did. The Spirit enables us to know Christ- to believe the truth about Him- and in this we find life and light! In our second point, we find that Spirit is also the comforter, helper and presence of God! To start off, we know that the HS is the comforter and helper. But how does the Spirit help us? Well, He comforts us as He brings to mind what Jesus said as John 14:26 says. As v. 27 continues- we can have peace- true enduring peace- because the Spirit of Christ has been given to us! The Spirit not only teaches, but comforts us when He enables us to remember what Jesus said and did! This truth calms our fears and quiets our anxious hearts! The peace and comfort that Christians enjoy is found in the presence and work of the Spirit! When overcome by fear of the unknown, the Spirit reminds us that our Good Shepherd holds us! When burdened by the weight of sin, the Spirit reminds us that Jesus has secured the forgiveness of all our sins! When sorrow fills our hearts at the presence of death, the Spirit reminds us that Jesus has overcome and that in Him we have everlasting life! Every solution that the Son of God provides is brought to mind by the Spirit! This is because the Spirit is the great comforter- the paraclete- the helper sent from the Son- proceeding from the Father and the Son- given to be with us forever. In John 14:23 we find that the Father loves us and will come to us- to make His home with us. But how does God come to us and dwell with us? Well, back in 14:17 we find the answer. It is specifically the Holy Spirit who dwells with us and will be in us! Or as I Cor. 6 puts it, your body is a temple of God because the Holy Spirit dwells in us! So the Spirit of God is the way in which we not only know God as we saw in our first point, He is also the way in which we experience God’s presence! He is the way in which we are with God- or how He is with us! So the Spirit dwells within us- setting us apart for worship- making us to be sacred and holy people. It is this aspect of the Spirit’s presence that comforts us! God is with us- within us! We are not alone or abandoned- we are not orphaned as Jesus would say- but rather God has come down to be with us and even within us! As QA 53 puts it, the Spirit has been given to me to comfort me and He will remain with me forever! This is a good reminder- and a fitting balance must be seen. The Spirit is not just concerned with truth and teaching- the academic part of the faith. He is also the guarantee of the personal, relational aspect of the faith. Sometimes the head and the heart are put in conflict or contrast. As if you can have the Spirit teach you but not dwelling within you. Now I want to be clear, Christianity is not a feeling-based religion but rather it is truth based. Founded upon certain and verifiable truths. However, our heart, emotions and desires have to be brought to conform to this truth. The Holy Spirit enables us to love God- not just know Him- but love Him! To feel His love and to experience His presence! This is also the work of the Holy Spirit- to have our hearts warmed and stirred! Sometimes there is a danger in our circles where we only focus on the teaching to the neglect of the relationship! A joyless, loveless person is not a true, Spirit filled Christian! So the feeling of peace and comfort- the experience of the presence of God- is a good and necessary part of the Christian faith! Because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ- He is unifying us to Christ our head! It is by the Spirit that we know God- but also by the Spirit we worship God rightly! Worship that is acceptable to God is not only worship that conforms to certain truths, but also that is heartfelt, joyful and reverent! So the Holy Spirit will never lead you away from Christ and His word- nor will His presence cause your love of Christ to fade or diminish! The Spirit’s work is not independent of the Father and the Son. The unity of the Trinity is at stake here. The Spirit is simply the way in which we come to know, experience and commune with the One, True God. And as a side note, this time of year we celebrate and remember that the Holy Spirit was not only instrumental in the birth of Jesus- as He was conceived by the Holy Spirit. It is also true that the Holy Spirit is the means by which Jesus Christ is present with us today as well! When considering the presence of the Holy Spirit, Jesus compares the presence and power of the Spirit to the wind. In John 3:8, Jesus says that like the wind, the Spirit cannot be seen. But also like the wind, the Spirit goes where He wills and does His work. So like the blowing of the wind, we should not be surprised at the secret or hidden nature of the Spirit’s work.

**III. The Fruit of the Spirit**

Now that we have considered the teaching work and comforting work of the Spirit, in our last point we briefly look at the fruit of the Spirit. How do we know if we have the Spirit? How do we know if others have the Spirit living in them? Well, as Jesus said, you will know them by their fruits. So what are the fruits of the Spirit’s presence? Well, to review what we have already considered. The first way in which you can be sure that you have the Holy Spirit living in you is if you know and love Jesus! Are the works and words of Jesus inscribed on your heart? Regeneration and sanctification- being born again by the Spirit and growing in holiness are a sure mark of the Spirit’s presence. Second, do you desire to commune with God and His people! The fellowship of the saints and the gathering for corporate worship is a fruit of the Spirit’s presence! Is your life and specifically your acts of worship designed to give God the glory that He deserves? Communion with God and His people is the second fruit of the Spirit’s work. Eph. 5:18 says do not be filled with wine, but rather be filled with the Spirit! Spirit filled worship- joyful singing and praise is the expected proof of the Spirit’s work. Thirdly, does your life and its character conform to the pattern of Christ? The well-known fruit of the Spirit are listed for us in Gal. 5:22-26. As the Spirit transforms us into the image of Christ; love, joy and peace will fill our hearts and be evident in our lives. Or As I Cor. 2 puts it, the Spirit gives us the mind of Christ! By the Spirit we can know the truth- and live in a way that reflect who we are in Christ! Going forward, we will see in the Catechism that our sanctification is by the Spirit! Our ability and desire to pray is by the Spirit! Our ability to know and keep the Law- only by the Spirit’s work. So may we all rejoice in the presence and power of the Spirit- who is able to take the words and work of Christ and apply them to our mind and heart!

To conclude, one of the main problems with Pentecostal teaching is that it elevates the Spirit over and above the other members of the Trinity. But Jesus taught that the Spirit works in union with the Father and the Son. He does not speak separately or abstractly. Rather His word is the word of Christ. His work is to apply the works of Christ! But we also need to be careful to avoid dead formalism. As we saw, the teaching and fruit of the Spirit come together! A joyless and loveless person is not Spirit filled! Because the Spirit makes us to be temples of our Holy God and fit instrument called to sacred service. In the OT, the Holy Spirit often fell on individuals as they were equipped for a specific task. Today, the Holy Spirit has been poured out on the whole church! The communal work of the Spirit is a delight to see! Jesus Christ pours out His Spirit upon the church for the equipping of the saints. So may we all pray to the Father in the name of the Son and the strength of the Spirit! Spirit of God, dwell within my heart!