

LD 20; John 14:15-17; Gal. 4:1-7; The Work of the Holy Spirit I. Distributer of Gifts II. Comforter III. Guarantee

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, how often do we think about the Holy Spirit? The Spirit has sometimes been called the shy member of the Trinity, but that is not to say that His work is any less important than that of the Son. As we continue work our way through the AC we enter the section concerning the Holy Spirit and our Sanctification. As a member of the Trinity, we confess that the Spirit is God having been sent by the Father and the Son. And today, specifically, we are going to focus on the work of the Holy Spirit. What does the Holy Spirit do? The Holy Spirit and His work are compared to water, fire and wind in the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is called the water that flows from within- welling up unto eternal life. The Spirit is compared to the fire that burns- purifying those He touches and anointed them for service. The Spirit is also compared to the wind that blows where He wills. Like the wind, the Spirit cannot be seen but His presence is clearly known as we see the consequence and change He brings. Particularly today as we have seen the installation of our office bearers, we are going to see that the Spirit's work is necessary for the establishment, maturity and growth of the church. So this morning we consider this theme: Jesus Christ pours out the Spirit on the church for the good of His people.

I. Distributer of Gifts

In our first point, we consider that work of the Spirit is to be the distributor of gifts. It is the work of the Spirit to take the blessings that Christ has purchased and apply them directly to His people. Now today we are going to be focussing on the gifts that the Spirit is bringing to us all; we are not going to focus on individual gifts or talents that the Spirit gives to each individual member. Rather, as we read in our Catechism, the Holy Spirit makes me share in Christ and all His benefits. That is our focus today- that the Spirit makes us share in Christ and His gifts. So the work of the Spirit is to take that which Christ has purchased- to bring those blessings and apply them directly to the members of the church. If we would not have the Spirit, all that Christ had done would remain useless to us! As Jesus said to Nicodemus, you must

be born again by the Spirit! So when the church is gathered, built, matured and established- this is in fact only possible if the Spirit is active. We find these words in John 16:14- The Spirit will glorify me, for He will take what is mine and declare it to you. So the work of the Spirit is to glorify the Son- and the way in which the Spirit glorifies the Son is by taking that which belongs to the Son and declaring it- or distributing it to the church. The Spirit is the glue by which we are joined to Christ and His works. So here we need to be clear, there is no division or separation in the work of God. As the Son came to reveal the Father; to carry out the will and work of the Father. So the Spirit has been poured out to reveal the Son- to carry out the will and work of the Son. There is no division here- no conflict. There is complete unity and cooperation! So when we look at the work and words of the Spirit, we should not expect the Spirit to say or do something that Jesus did not say or do! Rather, the Spirit continues and perfects that which the Son began. So what, exactly, does the Spirit do? Well, when it comes to spiritual life- the ability to understand the Words of the Bible, to receiving any benefit from the works of Christ; these are only possible because of the continued work of the Spirit! So let's follow this through. Jesus Christ has purchased the forgiveness of sins and eternal life for us, His people. But is the Work of the Spirit to produce a heart of sorrow and repentance within us! Life is found in the words of Jesus Christ- but it is the Spirit that opens our ears and eyes so that we can hear and see! Salvation comes by believing in the Son- but it is the Spirit that opens our hearts so that we believe the Words of the Son! The Spirit enables us to believe- He produces faith within! Without the Spirit's work, the seed of truth would remain dead- the Bible would be a dead letter to us. So any spiritual life, growth and understanding is only possible by way of the Spirit! The things of God would remain a mystery to us- if not for the Spirit who gives us the mind of Christ! So the Spirit is actively working in the people of God- but He is also working through the people of God. As we have just witnessed with the installation, Jesus sends men to serve as elders, pastors and deacons within the local church. And it is the Spirit who uses these men so that the church would be equipped and built up. The only way these men will be effective in their work is if they are anointed and equipped by this same Spirit! So that we might, as Eph.

4 puts it, attain the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God. So it is the Holy Spirit that teaches us and guides us into all truth. The Spirit who enables us to grow in wisdom, knowledge and holiness! The same Spirit who produces the fruit of Gal. 5:22- love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and self-control. So that we can live and walk by the Spirit- enjoying the new life that that Jesus has secured for us! So as the Spirit distributes the gifts of Christ to us, we have the truth applied and the change administered. We know the truth and we live differently! Wise, sanctified and mature!

II. Comforter

Now that we have been united to Christ, the Spirit not only distributes the gifts of Christ, He also carries the presence of Christ! As the catechism continues, the Holy Spirit comforts me. As we read from John 14:16, Jesus promised to send another comforter. So Jesus is and remains our comforter, but the Spirit is given as an added- or another comforter! Now this word, comforter, is “Paraclete” in the Greek. The word- Paraclete- means someone who comes along side us- someone who stands beside us. Not to condemn or accuse, but to comfort, carry and encourage! This work of the Spirit is so deep and encouraging that this word has been translated in many different ways. Here the Spirit as our Paraclete has been called our helper, our advocate, our counselor and our comforter. Each getting at a different aspect of this comforting work. The fact is, we all have times when we need assistance. When we are confused, we need counsel. When we are discouraged, we need comfort. When we are downhearted, we need someone to encourage us. But it is hard to find someone who can do all this! And here is where the Holy Spirit is such a gift! As we found in John 14:17- we know Him, we have received Him, and He will dwell with and will be in us! God the Spirit as our comforter is always with us- and He is always within us! So we have the very one we need to be our advocate, teacher, counselor and comforter with us at all times! As our counselor, the Spirit brings to mind all that Jesus said and did. He teaches us- leading us into all truth! So that we know the truth and begin to think rightly! As our comforter, the Spirit applies the comforting words of Jesus to us! Reminding us of the benefits that belong to us as God’s people! As our advocate, the Spirit intercedes from within –

even putting into words the very groans of our heart! Now the presence and words of other people can be of great encouragement and comfort. But the fact remains, those who are visiting may not know what to say- they may be at a loss! Or perhaps distance restricts those who can visit. But this is never the case with the Holy Spirit! Have you ever had a passage of Scripture come to mind when you needed it the most? Have you ever had a verse of the Bible help you in a time of temptation or trial? Well, this is the working of the Holy Spirit! When I visit with those who are in the midst of great struggle- when I am praying for them- I almost always ask the Spirit to be with them and comfort them. This is because the presence and work of the Holy Spirit is one of the most precious gifts that Jesus has given to us! The Holy Spirit applies the healing balm of Gilead as He applies the Word- or brings to mind the works and person of Jesus- and those who are wounded and distressed find peace and comfort for their weary souls! Worldly comforts do not last- worldly comforters cannot stay. But the comfort of the Spirit is perfect- exactly what we need!

III. Guarantee

And this fact- that the Spirit's comfort is perfect- is clearly seen in our last point as well. Not only does the Spirit comfort us today- in our lives and during our struggles now. He also prepares us- and sustains us- for the joy and the blessings of tomorrow. The Spirit is not only a teacher and a comforter, He is also a guarantor of our future blessings! Eph. 1:14 says that we are sealed with the promised Holy Spirit who is the guarantee- of the down payment of our inheritance. And again, in II Cor. 1:22 Christ has put His seal on us and have given us His Spirit as a guarantee. So the Holy Spirit is a promise- given as a portion that secures a future full payment. The fact is, we are already sons and daughter of God. We already have the right of access and the privilege of calling God our Father. But the Spirit is also a seal- the surety- He is the promise from God to prove to us that we will never lose this right and privileged. He proves that our sonship is valid! We are sons and heirs as we read in Gal. 4. Not that God would ever forget or break His promise. The Spirit does not need to remind the Father of His Love for us. Rather, the Spirit is a promise to us- an encouragement to us- to remind us of what we have and to assure us of what we cannot lose! Added to

this, the Spirit work will continue until He finishes. As Phil. 1 puts it, He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it. The Spirit has begun a good work in you! He has already given you a heart of faith- by the Spirit you have been born again to a living hope. By the Spirit you continue in that hope as you are sanctified. The Spirit is molding you in the image of Christ- making you more like Him. And the Spirit is getting you ready for eternity. He is going to continue His work within until you arrive at perfection- when the day arrives and you are made like Christ in all His glory! The Spirit has anointed us- we are God's special and treasured possession! The Spirit proves this fact! We are the apple of His eye- and the Spirit assures us of God's abiding love! We could illustrate it like this- the Spirit is like an engagement ring. God gave the Spirit to us as a token of His love- to prove His love to us- and as a promise of our future together! As the engagement gives way to the wedding- the down payment of the Spirit will be met with the full harvest of blessing! So the Spirit is a guarantee of our present and a promise of our future with God in glory! As a seal, the Spirit is a mark of ownership! He proves that we belong to God! As a down payment, the Spirit is the first installment of what will be a glorious consummation. He is a foretaste of our future if you will. That is why the Spirit is such a blessing- such a gift! He is a constant reminder of the One to whom we belong and Place where we are going!

As we close, the Holy Spirit is not the forgotten member of the Trinity, rather He is the closest and most constant companion of the Christian! Jesus Christ pours out the Spirit on the church for the good of His people. As the wind and fire that came down on Pentecost, the Spirit continues to move and work mightily in the nations to this day! Just as the breath of God brought to life an army from a pile of bones in Ezekiel- so the Spirit continues to bring life today! He is bringing the Kingdom to come- and He is sanctifying the church by the truth! So much so that we can confess with the Catechism- the Holy Spirit makes me share in Christ's benefits, comforts me, and will remain with me forever! So may we all rejoice in the gift of the Spirit- who proceeds from the Father and the Son- and who with the Father and the Son is to be worshipped and glorified!