

Luke 12:8-12; Rom. 10: 8-13; Speaking by the Spirit I. Confessing the Truth by the Spirit II. Denying the Work of the Spirit III. Defending your Faith by the Spirit

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, what does the Spirit do today? And how important is the Spirit and His work in our lives? When it comes to the truth, people have a different response to it. Some deny the truth and suppress its claim- while others embrace the truth and proclaim it freely. What makes the difference? Why do some embrace and other deny the truth of the gospel? Well, today we are going to see the benefit and blessing of the Holy Spirit as His presence is felt within the church. As we saw last week, when we live in the fear of man we will tend to be silent about our faith and even to deny the truth. But if we fear the Lord- we will believe in Him, confess the truth openly and obey! So we consider this theme: Jesus Christ sends the Holy Spirit so that the church might acknowledge the truth. Have you ever been accused of doing something- even if you know you are guilty- how do people tend to respond? Denial and deflection- someone else did it; it was not me! Well, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth- and today this Spirit enables us to love and speak the truth.

I. Confessing the Truth by the Spirit

So in our first point we find that the Holy Spirit- sent by Jesus- enables us to speak the truth and profess our faith publicly. In v. 8 we find that everyone who acknowledges Christ- if you declare Him as your Lord- you will be acknowledged by the Lord. The word for acknowledge is the word for confession- to declare and admit- even to profess that you are in fact a worshipper of God. This is not just a public profession of faith, but a consistent and continual thing. We could read it like this- if you might continue to profess- Jesus will certainly confess. Who are we called to confess our faith before? Before men- before people. It is to be a part of our life- made visible and verbal. Before the watching word and in the presence of the church. Rom. 10 says it this way- if you believe in your heart and confess with your mouth, you will be saved. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. So a secret and hidden faith is not true faith- rather what you believe in your heart must and will be made known by your mouth. And the world will hear and see. The consequence of this belief and public profession is a public profession in heaven. If you confess before men that you are a Christian- that you believe in and belong to Jesus Christ- then Jesus will in turn claim you for His own in glory! Jesus will acknowledge you before the Father and the angels. Jesus will say- this one is mine- He belongs to me! Here Jesus is promising- He will make known to the whole world on the last day- This

one is mine and I am His! He will visibly and verbally vindicated! This is a glorious truth- before the whole watching world on that last day the Son will say that He knows us- He will confess our name above just as we have confessed His name below! But how do we have the strength to confess this truth- how do we have the boldness to stand before the world and state what we believe? Well- listen to I Cor. 12:3- everyone who is speaking by the Spirit will say- Jesus is Lord! If you have the Holy Spirit living in your heart, your tongue will be loosed to say- I believe that Jesus is the Son of God and He has been raised from the dead. So Jesus knows and will confess our names- if we confess His name in this life. But what about those who do not? Well- those who are ashamed- if you deny Him- if you refuse to claim Him; He will not claim you. If you do not want to be aligned with Him below- you will not be aligned with Him above! If you disavow Him- wanting nothing to do with Him- He will have nothing to do with you. He will say away from me- depart! You did not know me on earth- I do not now know you in heaven! If you choose to fear men below, you will not be embraced above. A solemn warning made clear in v. 9- Jesus will deny these in heaven. If you are ashamed...

II. Denying the Work of the Spirit

But what if you have in fact denied Jesus on earth? What if because of fear you have failed to speak the truth- you have not defended your faith as you ought and have remained silent when you should have spoken out? Are you therefore condemned without hope? Not at all- Jesus continues by comforting His disciples in v. 10- if you have spoken a word against Jesus you can still be forgiven. It is possible for a Christian to fall into sin and temptation. To act contrary to the truth in their heart- a hasty or fear driven denial when the sword of persecution is present. We need to think only of Peter- who denied that he even knew Jesus- even calling a curse on himself in Luke 22- I never knew this man and I don't know what you are talking about! This is a very serious sin and it grieves God- but it is not unforgivable! As Peter found out in John 21- Peter was restored and found hope again! Jesus has prayed for Peter- so that his faith would not fail. And although severely hampered- true faith does remain! So even disrespectful words- hurting words spoken against the Son can be forgiven. It is assumed that the one who says these words will repent in sorrow for them. Even the thief on the cross would start off cursing the Son only to be converted to embracing and praising Him. However, if you speak out against the Spirit you will not be forgiven. Jesus speaks of a blaspheme against the Spirit in v. 10. "Blaspheme" is itself a Greek word- meaning to curse, speak against and even vilify. Now

we need to be clear here- Jesus is teaching about what we tend to call the unforgiveable sin. What is this unpardonable sin. The unforgivable sin is a continual, persistent rejection of the Holy Spirit and the gospel. It is to blaspheme God by attributing the works of the Spirit to the Devil. As Rev. 13 says- the beast opened his mouth to blaspheme God- to speak haughty words against the Lord. To have a blasphemous heart is to have a hard heart that lives without faith and hope. Now there are examples of this as well. Think of the context. The Pharisees were claiming in chapter 11:15- Jesus was casting out demons by the power of the Prince of Demons. Instead of testifying to the fact that Jesus was Spirit filled- they were saying that Jesus was Devil filled! Again in 11:53- after seeing all that Jesus had done and hearing His preaching, they reject the truth and seek to provoke Him- trying to trip Him up and trap Him. So the Pharisees were doing the very thing that Jesus was warning against! This resisting of the Spirit is akin to being hard hearted and still necked. I John 4 speaks of the Spirit of the anti-Christ. Those who reject and deny the truth about Christ are speaking by a spirit- not the Holy Spirit- but the spirit of deception- the spirit of the antichrist. As Esau illustrates in Heb. 12:17- since he knowing he had done wrong still found no place for repentance. It is a deliberate act of rebellion against the Spirit- as Ananias and Saphira found out in Acts 5- sinning against the Spirit by trying to deceive Him. Even one of Jesus' disciples- Judas- shows how a hard heart leads to rebellion! A stubborn and continual rejection of the truth that leads to death. Judas, like Esau, found no place for repentance- thus his despair. Now this is not to deny the power of the Holy Spirit. He is effective and He will change the hearts and wills of those whom the Father has chosen. But in the context of the covenant- those who hear the gospel and see the signs of Christ's power- and yet to deny it and say it is evil and of the Devil. This is the one that commits this grave sin. And to be clear, it is a continual hardness. Many Christians have worried- have I committed this sin? But to worry about committing it- to fear that you have done this grave evil- is to prove your desire to repent. Sorrow for sin is a mark of the Spirit's continued presence and work. Thus it is still the day of salvation and time remains to repent, believe and find life in Christ by way of the Spirit's work!

III. Defending your Faith by the Spirit

As we come to our final point, Jesus is revealing the presence of persecution- that His disciples can expect men to reject and even imprison them for their faith. Follow the development- Christ by His Spirit teaches His disciples to

profess the truth- and to remain steadfast under trial. Instead of denying Christ, they have boldly proclaimed and defended their faith. Now- since they have not bowed the knee to men- they have not cowered in fear before the rulers of this world- the disciples find themselves in prison. Yet, even here in prison, His disciples need not fear because the Holy Spirit remains with them. Even comforting, encouraging and equipping them. As v. 12 concludes, when you are hauled before rulers and authorities do not be anxious or fret about what you should say, because the Holy Spirit will give you the words to say. In the hour of need the Spirit will loosen your lips. Yes, persecution is coming. But even in this dark hour, know that the Spirit will equip you to be as bold as lions. Think of Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego. In the presence of the fiery furnace and angry Nebuchadnezzar- these friends said- Our God is able to save us from this furnace and He will deliver us from your hand- and know this- we will not serve your gods or worship your golden image! Such boldness and eloquence in the face of severe trial. Or think of Peter and John in Acts 4; and the apostles again in Acts 5 and Stephan's speech in Acts 7. What Jesus promised He supplies by way of the Spirit's presence. This same Peter wrote in I Peter 3- always be ready to make a defense to anyone who asks for a reason for the hope that is in you. Even today, we are called upon to stand firm when those in power assault us. As II Tim. 3 says, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ will be persecuted. These disciples had received a special promise of wisdom in speech- but we today share in this same blessed Spirit. As we pray for wisdom, we know that the Spirit will give us the words we need. They would preach with great boldness after Pentecost- and the Spirit continues to teach and instruct us how to be a good witness today. As John 14 says, the Spirit will teach you and cause you to remember all that I said. If the antichrist is the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ and Lord- then it is only by the Spirit that we can confess that Jesus is the Lord and defend this truth no matter the consequence- no matter whom we stand before! Connecting this to last week- is by the Spirit that we can be consistent, truthful and faithful in our testimony.

To conclude, the Holy Spirit is the added comforter and the Divine Teacher who dwells within. Our theme is that Jesus Christ sends the Holy Spirit so that the church might acknowledge the truth. He instructs us and gives us the mind of Christ so that we might know Him who is true- confess that Jesus is Lord- and defend this truth before the watching world. I do not know when and where you will be called upon to give a defense, but by the Spirit you can know that you are never alone and never without the wisdom you need.