

The Right Tool for the Job!

“But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.”

You may have noticed that there is a right tool for the job. I would rather see scalpels in an operating room than chainsaws. I rather see fine drills in the dentist office than a huge jack hammer. I would rather use sharp scissors to cut pictures apart than to simply try to tear them.

God tells us today that he uses the right tool for the job. What is his job? That all believe in Jesus and not perish. And the tool he uses is God the Holy Spirit. Pentecost Day is a day we celebrate to remember how God gives us the Holy Spirit. We will see how the Holy Spirit is the right tool for Jesus’ disciples and how he is the right tool for us.

I. The Holy Spirit is the right tool for Jesus’ disciples.

Hatred. Persecution. Most likely death. This is the future Jesus’ disciples will face when he returns to heaven in the ascension. Jesus warned them just verses before our text: ***“If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.”*** History tells us that eleven of the twelve disciples were murdered simply because they preached sermons on Jesus Christ.

How can you encourage a group with that kind of future? Well, Jesus could have told them, “Shhhh! Don’t say a word. Stay in hiding.” But if he did, then no one else will go to heaven. Instead, he made them a promise. ***“Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.”***

A parent is teaching his child how to ride a bike. Sooner or later he will have to let go. This is NOT what Jesus is saying here. He is not saying, “I’m leaving; good luck.” Rather, he must leave so he can send someone, God the Holy Spirit. It is like dad letting go of the bike only to have mom grab it right away and help the child stay upright and not crash.

Friends, we know that the Holy Spirit is the one who creates faith in our hearts. But Jesus is not referring to the Holy Spirit in this way. The disciples already had the Spirit. They already believed. Jesus is referring to a special outpouring of the Spirit, a special gift. In the Old Testament, Moses was afraid to Pharaoh so God promised, ***“I will help you speak and will teach you what to say.”*** Jeremiah was afraid, so, ***“The Lord reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, ‘Now I have put my words in your mouth.’*** Once Jesus sent out his disciples to do mission work with this promise, ***“At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.”*** Paul admitted to the Corinthians, ***“My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power. ... This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words TAUGHT MY THE SPIRIT.”*** And we saw this in an earlier reading, disciples hiding behind locked doors, receiving the Spirit, going out and boldly proclaiming God’s Word in different languages.

This gift of the Spirit made sure the disciples spoke God’s Word, not their own. And this gave them great courage, even in the face of death. This is why Jesus calls him the “Comforter,” “Counselor,” the one who will go with them and not only tell them what to say, but even give them the courage to say it. Good for the disciples. But what does this mean to us?

Simply this. Because God gave them this special gift, we now have God’s word. The Bible is the writings of these very same believers, and the words they put down are the very words God gave them.

This is huge! This means when we read or hear our Bibles, we are hearing and reading God. Listen to people talk today. They always qualify things by saying, “I think,” or “I feel.” There is an abbreviation on the internet, IMHO, “in my humble opinion.” But such phrases are absent when the Bible is read. We don’t say, “I think Jesus is God.” We say, “I believe Jesus is God.” We don’t say, “In my humble opinion I think the world was created in six days,” but rather we say, “I know God created the world in six days.” And we don’t say, “I would like to think I am going to heaven,” but we can say with complete certainty, “My Redeemer lives and in the end I will see him, with my own eyes, in my flesh I will see him”

Friends, stop treating the Bible like some fragile book that might crumble in pieces. Stop apologizing for it. It is God’s Word. Treat it as such. Praise God for it. Believe it.

II. The right tool for us.

But the Holy Spirit didn’t just give us the Bible; because of him we actually believe it. You and I know that Jesus died on the cross to pay for our sins. So, because of Jesus we will go to heaven and not to hell. Without Jesus, of course, we would go to hell. But without the Holy Spirit, we would still go to hell.

“Wait a minute,” you would object. “Jesus came into this world to die for my sins. How in the world can you say that without the Spirit I would still go to hell?” It is like a horn. Sitting on a shelf, it will never make music. But blow into it and music comes out. Likewise, unless the Spirit blows into us, we would never believe and be saved.

“When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.”

The text uses the word, “convict,” here, but convict also has the idea of convincing. If a person is convicted, it is only because the jury was convinced he did it. Unless the Holy Spirit convinces the world about sin and righteousness and judgment, they will never get it. The world and all people who live in it have no idea what these terms really mean.

Take sin, for example. Sinful human beings will admit they have faults, but they don’t understand how sinful they are or how utterly corrupt mankind is. We would like to think we are more like a seed, something with potential if planted and given a chance. Wrong. We are like stones without any potential whatsoever. We see it in the excuses we make to hide our corruption. We blame it on an imbalance in the brain, or society or the environment we live in, the neighbors, or they made me do it.

Mankind will never understand righteousness. We think we are like major league pitchers. The best pitchers in the world still have an ERA of around two. That means they are good, but they still give up on average two runs a game. So, we convince ourselves that we don’t have to be perfect. All we have to do is keep our sins and faults to a minimum. Wrong.

And the world will never fully get judgment. How can a loving God send people to hell? Punish them, sure, but condemn them? Would a loving father willingly pull on the switch that would execute his son in an electric chair? Either they believe in heaven and not in hell, or they think that hell is only for the really bad. Wrong.

It is the Holy Spirit who convinces us of sin. He alone produces that true remorse and shame that would lead us to confess that there is nothing good living in me. We are stones, not seeds. We should be taken out of the field, not planted there. He alone convinces us of a righteousness that comes from God. In baseball terms, Jesus pitched a perfect game every game, no runs, no hits, no walks, no errors, no balls, only strikes. The other eight players could sit in the dugout with Jesus on the mound. This is righteousness and it can come only from Jesus, not us.

And to judgment? It is only the Holy Spirit who convinces us that yes, a loving God must punish people in hell because he is fair, but God loved us so much, he sent Jesus there instead so we can spend eternity in heaven! The world messes this all up. They claim love will not punish. The Bible tells us that love saves us from the punishment we so well deserve. Again, the world doesn’t get, but we do, thanks to the Holy Spirit.

This section can be equated with one word: faith. Faith comes from hearing God’s Word because it is through that Word the Spirit sparks, creates, nourishes and inflames faith. Remember, no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. We believe because the Holy Spirit convinces us of our sin, Jesus’ righteousness, and the judgment to eternal life. In other words, God plants a garden, but he doesn’t plant seeds. He plants stones. Yet, miraculously he makes the stones produce a shoot, then a plant and then all kinds of fruits and vegetables.

Imagine the courage this gave Jesus’ disciples. They didn’t have to prevent the ascension, chain Jesus up in cage, and parade him around like a freakshow, “See the man who came back to life. Put your fingers in his nail wounds.” Instead, all they had to do was unleash the Holy Spirit in their preaching and leave the results up to him.

Imagine what this means to us! It doesn’t matter if the pastor mutters or speaks in monotone or is less than eloquent (Paul confessed he was not a good speaker). Though the devil will tempt us to concentrate on the muttering or convince us it is boring, the Spirit is there calling people to faith. Imagine what this means to a Downs syndrome person who may not have the same level of understanding you do. That doesn’t matter because the Spirit convinces, not human ability. Imagine what this means when a little water and the words are spoken on a baby. The Spirit is working faith. Imagine the relief this gives, not to mention the courage, when we witness. It is the Spirit who convinces, not us.

Doesn’t this make us appreciate our Bibles more? Doesn’t this make church and worship, Sunday School, meditations, a joy? We appreciate God more because he found a way to make dead stones produce flowers and crops.

Yes, many, sadly most, do not believe. It is not because the Spirit isn’t convincing them. It is because they don’t want to be convinced. It is sad when Christians who once courageously confessed Christ, let the Word and thus the Spirit be replaced by other things in their lives.

May it not be with us. Don’t use a chainsaw to clean your teeth! Use the only tool that works on us, the Holy Spirit. Let’s relish, cherish, welcome, believe him. Amen.