

02.17.21 – A Weekly Word for Covenant Church

Title: “Once You Die to Yourself, the Spirit Can Give You Life.”

Scripture Reading: [Acts 9:19-43](#)

Reflection: Pastor Evan

Pastor Doug’s sermon this past week was introduced with a description of independence that easily turns a person into an egomaniac who has no regard for other’s property or lives. Pastor Doug said and I quote, “The primary problem with wanting to control our own destiny is we ignore that each beat of our heart is a gift from God (and ultimately we have little control over those beats). We belong to God.”

It was not good for Adam to be alone, so God created Eve; God gave them to each other as partners. Together they were blessed with a relationship with God and with God’s creation. And they had no shame with each other. All was good, very good, for a while.

Failing to stay humble in their created relationship with God, they were no longer at peace with each other, with creation, or with themselves. You already know that sin has seriously affected everything and everybody.

Graciously, Jesus was Immanuel – God with us – and willingly became our sacrificial lamb before God the Father breaking sin’s power for all those who believe in him as King of kings; life became reality instead of death. And now the Church is the messenger of that good news until Jesus returns in the fullness of the Kingdom.

Luke wrote Acts to continue the story line of Jesus’ presence on earth (now through the Church and Spirit). Saul, with all his zealotry, had a “Jesus moment” and became one who could not stop telling and preaching about Jesus, and proving and persuading from the Old Testament Bible (the Law and the Prophets) that Jesus was God’s Messiah. Peter also was privileged to tell about Jesus and to perform signs and wonders that convinced people of his message so that they too believed in Jesus as their Messiah and Lord.

Circumstances were such that Saul went back home to Tarsus for a while and Peter moved around in Judea. Those circumstances led to the announcement in Acts 9:31 - “Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.”

The Church was able to bring in the kingdom when those identified as Jesus’ followers died to an attitude of personal independence and sacrificially submitted to living in the fear of the Lord. Becoming like Jesus (discipleship) became paramount; serving others and meeting others’ needs became their number one objective.

Consciously and prayerfully giving themselves over to Jesus as Lord caused the encouragement of the Holy Spirit to the Church of the first century. The Spirit of God filled those who asked for the Spirit in a spirit of humility and service.

As we re-imagine the Church of the 21st century in light of the first-century Church, we need to follow the example of the first century believers. We need to live in humble fear of the Lord in whom all authority in heaven and earth belongs (Matthew 28:18) and ask that the presence of the Holy Spirit will fill us and take over all lingering ideas of selfishness.

The result in the first century should not surprise us: “it increased in numbers.” The Church in the 21st century can also increase in numbers if we live together in community, in the fear of the Lord, and give ourselves to being filled with and filled by God’s Spirit.

Prayer:

Our Father, father of all your children, draw us to yourself so that we will be blinded by your presence having selfish eyes scaled over and so that we will wholeheartedly die to self and be raised to life in Jesus. Amen

Action Item for the Day/Week:

Before you can minister to others, prayerfully invite the Spirit to minister to you. What needs to happen for you to die to yourself?

Songs for today:

[Spirit of the Living God, Fall Fresh on Me](#)