



The Spirit-Driven Church

One of the fond memories of my childhood (perhaps from 8 - 13 yrs of age) was when dad decided to go out for a drive on Saturday mornings. No one really knew where we were going except dad, & he didn't bother explaining. He just asked if we wanted to go for a ride out in the country. Of course, mom always enjoyed getting away from the house for a few hours, and we kids did too. My parents had 10 children & I don't recall all of us ever going any place at once in the same car. I was the 6th child, so by the time I was 10 or 12 yrs old, 3 or 4 of my older bros & sisters were hardly ever around the house anymore. But the remainder of us would rush for the car & fight over the best seat, which was always in back by the window, on the drivers side. Dad always drove on these excursions, & Mom always sat in front with the 2 youngest ones, which meant there would be 4 or 5 of us kids in the back seat.

It was great fun. On those warm, summer days in Wisconsin, we'd roll down all the car windows. The lucky ones who got a window seat could stick their heads out & feel the wind blowing through their hair & in their face. We lived in rural communities most of my growing up years, mainly because dad could find a larger & less expensive house to rent out of town a few miles. I found out later that our family rides were not without purpose. Dad was usually either looking for a place to pick berries, searching for a source of firewood, or scouting out a vacant house to rent more cheaply than our current one. Whenever we did drive through a town, he was looking for a better employment opportunity for himself or for one of my older brothers.

But on the way we enjoyed ourselves. It seemed like dad would find some of the tallest hills around to drive up, which meant he would have to shift down into 2nd gear, & sometimes into low just to make it up in our old car. The ride down the other side was exhilarating though. Dad would put the clutch in & shift into neutral & let the car coast faster & faster downhill.

Even though mom was in the front seat, she was the back-seat driver. "Slow down, are you trying to kill us? Watch out, there's a curve up ahead! What if a dog or a deer were to run out in front of us, then what would you do?" And dad would ask, "Who's driving, you or me? Do you want to drive?" "You know I don't". "Well, all right then."

I remember a few times during the winter when the roads were icy we'd go out on some back deserted road & dad would stop & let some of us kids hang on to the rear bumper & slide on our ice skates. A couple times we took a big sled along & tied it to the back of the car with a long rope. Then 2 or 3 of us would pile on & let the car pull us. Either way, we didn't have any control over where we went, how fast, or for how long. We usually rode until someone fell off.

When I was in the 10th or 11th grade, one of my classes was Driver's Education. For some reason, none of the other teachers seemed to envy the job of the driver's Ed instructor. After all the classroom instruc & study of the drivers manual, he would take 3 student drivers out at a time for training, with 1 on the passenger side in front, & the other 2 in the back seat. First he would drive, telling us just what he was doing, & why. Basically, he announced every turn, stop, or driving maneuver he was going to make, informed us of the state law governing that action, made the right move, & explained every move he made. Then it was the student's turn to put into practice what he had learned, so he would climb into the driver's seat of the parked vehicle.

The instructor would observe carefully every move the student made: adjusting the seat & mirrors, checking the pedals for distance & clearance, fastening the seat belt, starting the engine, releasing the emergency brake, engaging the xmsn, checking the rear-view mirror for traffic, looking over your left shoulder, accelerating, easing the car out into the lane of traffic, etc. It was never up to the student driver to decide where to go nor the route to take; he or she was simply to obey the instructor's directions.

The Driver's Ed car was specially equipped. It had dual controls in front, on the left side & also on the right. The instructor was able to override any turn, acceleration, braking action or other maneuver of the student driver by using his own steering wheel, and clutch, brake or accelerator pedal. It was a relief to know that if you blew it, someone else was there to correct your wrong action.

In order to drive safely & arrive at your desired destination, someone has to be in control. Somebody has to know where he is going, have a purpose in mind, & know how to get there. There may be some unavoidable detours along the way; he may come across a roadblock & have to turn back, the driver may have to deal with mechanical problems in keeping his vehicle going & on course. But a good driver who has determination, a desire, and a strong incentive, will arrive at his desired destination & fulfill his purpose.

I am intrigued by the express & precise wording of this passage of divine script recorded in the gospel of Mark.

Mark 1:9-14

9 And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.

10 And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him:

11 And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

*12 And immediately **the Spirit driveth him** into the wilderness.*

13 And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.

14 Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,

The rapidly unfolding sequence of events in the life of Jesus Christ is developed by Mark with a lot of strong action verbs. His divinely inspired record is brief & to the point. He uses such words as "immediately" and "straitway" often. It's a chronology of Jesus on the move, going somewhere, doing something, actively involved in fulfilling the ministry God has given him.

At the beginning of our text, He has just been baptized. As he came up out of the water, he saw the heavens being rent asunder, & the Spirit descending upon him like a dove. Literally, according to Wuest's Word Studies, the Spirit took up residence **in** him. He was endued with power from on high. He was equipped with a divine dynamic to discharge the duties for which he had been born.

And then, after the affirmative voice from heaven, saying, "Thou art..." we see the same Spirit which had descended like a dove, with all of its attendant grace, purity & loveliness, immediately **driving** him into the wilderness. It is a very strong word. Strong's says it means, "to eject: bring forth, cast forth, drive out, expel, pluck (pull, take, thrust) out, put forth, send away". Thayer's Lexicon says the word 'drive' means, "to lead one forth or away somewhere with a force which he cannot resist". The idea expressed is not so much that Jesus was reluctant to go, but that he felt an intense constraint of the Spirit moving him. So intent was he on doing his Father's will that he was driven from within. The Spirit drove him into the wilderness; into an uninhabited place.

John the baptist had also been led into the wilderness solitude. We are not told how long he was there; only that he was in the deserts until the day of his manifestation to Israel. John understood that he was always to be led of the Spirit, & he managed to maintain the mindset that God was in the driver's seat of his life.

The Bible says, "*There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.*" *Sent* in the Greek is ap-os-tel-low". Compare apostolic. According to Strong's, the word means "to commission, set apart for a special service, send a message by someone, send out with a msn to fulfill, equip & dispatch one with the full backing & authority of the sender."

John was a heaven-sent man with a heaven-sent message that was sorely needed for his day. He came as a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light; his claim to identity was that he was a voice, a voice of one crying in the wilderness...

His message called for repentance. It enlightened the human conscience of those who were engulfed in darkness. You see, darkness cannot comprehend the light; it cannot lay hold of it with the mind; it is unreceptive. But John had been filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb, and the prophecy had gone forth from an angel of the Lord that this young man would go before Christ in the spirit & power of Elijah, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

Let me talk to you about the holy compulsion of the Spirit for a moment. He may lead you against the will of your own spirit. Look at **Eze 3** for a moment with me.

Ezek 3:10-11

10 Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, all my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears.

11 And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord God; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.

God had a word for the children of the captivity. They wouldn't receive it, yet the prophet was to proclaim it fearlessly. **He went because the Spirit lifted him up & took him away.**

God has put something in us that is higher & more powerful than self. There is something which compels us, which commands us as servants of the Lord. And isn't it amazing that what we expected to be unpleasant & unrewarding becomes the turning point of our ministry? How important to our lives is this divine constraint! He does not need to ask for my consent. My limited understanding does not always allow me to respond like I should.

Ezekiel said he went in bitterness, in the heat of his own spirit. But that didn't turn aside God's better intentions for him. I wonder how many of us are learning the great truth of **Ro 8.28** and following: *"And we know that all things work together to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

There is no force in this universe as strong as the force of God's love. It always works for our good. The Holy Ghost will protect us from the impetuous desires of our own nature if we will but submit to his leading.

Eze 3.24 says, *"The Spirit entered into me, & set me upon my feet, & said unto me, Go, shut thyself within thine house."*

The Spirit will separate you, & in that place of separation, apart from the crowd, you will come to know that you are somebody. You will feel chosen, designated. He will give you a new recognition of yourself as important in God's economy of grace.

The Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness, where he was alone with the wild beasts. Before he could meet the public, he had to meet with his heavenly Father. He had to pray. He had to fast. He had to be tempted of Satan. The last Adam had to be put to the test to see if he was equipped & ready for his ministry. Holy angels were looking on. Fallen angels were looking on. Tremendous things were at stake as Satan solicited him to do evil while he was in a

hostile environment.

But holy angels were there in the place where the Spirit drove him. The angels ministered unto him among the wild beasts of the wilderness. Since we know they did not bring him food or drink, their ministry must have been to the soul. The Expositors Commentary says, “Those few touches of Mark suggest a vivid picture of a spiritual crisis: intense pre-occupation, instinctive retreat into uncongenial, grim solitudes, temptation, struggle, fierce & protracted, issuing in weakness, calling for preternatural aid.”

First, heaven must touch us; then we can touch earth. We can't go out until we have come in. An old chorus testifies this way, “Shut in with God in the secret place: there in the Spirit beholding his face; gaining new power to run in this race. I long to be shut in with God.”

In the words of **Psa 91**,

91:1 He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

2 I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.

3 Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.

4 He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.

5 Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day;

6 Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.

7 A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.

8 Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.

9 Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation;

10 There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.

11 For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.

The compulsion of the Spirit, the loneliness of the Spirit - these issue forth in the practicality of the Spirit. In those 40 days, Jesus gained a dimension of victory over Satan that enabled him henceforth, as we read in Mk 1, to cast out all manner of unclean spirits & to heal people of all manner of diseases.

Luke says that after Satan left him, Jesus **returned in the power of the Spirit**. The same Spirit that descended on him from the rent heavens, & drove him into the wilderness, now thrust him into an authoritative & purposeful ministry. He came out preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. He came calling men from their nets to follow him, & he would make them to become fishers of men. They straightway forsook their nets & began to follow the same road he took. They joined him in fellowship & became his disciples.

He returned into Nazareth, where he had grown up, went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, stood to his feet, opened the book, & found the place where it is written, **Luke 4:18-19**

18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

All that heard him were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority. They were amazed at his words & deeds. His fame spread far & wide.

Mk 1.35

And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.

Jesus may have had others praying for him; we are not told. But we **are** told that **he** prayed. It's right & proper to have

others pray **for** us, but we still need to do our own praying. Jesus never felt as though he had reached the point where he no longer needed to depart into a solitary place & there pray. He well knew that:

His sense of identity had to be confirmed;

his own will had to be conformed;

he had to be transformed;

the virtue which went out from him had to be restored;

his dynamic for miracles, signs & wonders had to be renewed; and

the Spirit that dwelt within him had to be revived.

Mark 1:36-39

36 And Simon and they that were with him followed after him.

37 And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee.

38 And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth.

39 And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.

He prayed because he felt he needed it. The Spirit drove him to go after it. He returned in the power of it. Dare we do less?

Prayer gave Jesus a sense of purpose & divine destiny: “*Therefore came I forth*”, he declared, “*that I might preach, preach, preach.*”

In 4 bears record of his sense of mission with these telling words: “*he must needs go through Samaria*”. It was there, in Samaria, at Jacob’s well, that our Lord offered **living** water to a woman who came there to draw water. He opened the wound of her marital infidelity, then he revealed himself as the answer to her unsatisfied longing, saying “I am the Messiah you seek; I am the Christ.” She left her waterpot, & went her way into the city, testifying of the Christ to all the men she knew. About that time, his disciples returned from town where they had gone for food. They begged him to eat something, but he replied, “*I have meat to eat that ye know not of.... My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, & to finish his work.*”

Young people, did you know that even at the age of 12 years, the boy Jesus was very much aware of his purpose in being on earth? On one occasion, when his parents had taken him with them to the feast of the Passover in Jerusalem, the child had lingered behind when they left to go home. By the time Joseph & his mother realized that Jesus was not in the caravan of pilgrims & had returned & found Jesus in the temple, three days had passed. When they finally found him, they were amazed, because he was...

sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?

The Father’s business must become **our** business. The same consuming passion that drove Jesus must drive us. As Bro. T.F. Tenney puts it, “The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.”

Preacher, do you still feel the same fire burning in your heart that you felt when God first called you? Can you identify with the apostle Paul, who said, “*Though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel?*”

Like holy men of old, who spake **as they were moved by the Holy Ghost**, we also must we be inspired & borne along by the wind of the Spirit as we speak in his name. Too often, we settle for something less: we speak & act in **our** name; we say & do in the power of **our** spirit. I would that we would all come to the knowledge of this truth, that it is “*not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.*”

Near the end of his short life in the days of his flesh, Jesus stood before Pilate & declared,

To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.

We must always remember that eternity includes this present hour. We are not saved merely so we can reap the retirement benefits in heaven. There is a cause that is higher & nobler than anything of earth. No man can lead others to destiny whose eye is not focused on where the Spirit leads, for he will show us things to come.

If you will humble yourself, & pray, & seek his face, & wait patiently for him, & allow him to take control of your life, God will lead you beside still waters. When you falter & slip, he will restore your soul: he will lead you in paths of righteousness for his name sake. Yea, though you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, you need fear no evil, for his rod and his staff will comfort you. He will prepare a table before you in the presence of your enemies.

The Holy Ghost is contagious! Walk among Spirit-filled believers & you will be influenced by them. Follow the steps of the shepherd the Holy Ghost has placed over you, & you will find green pastures. Listen to his voice, obey it, & you will fulfill your ministry.

In the 1st chapter of Mark, we are told that a leper came to Jesus, beseeching him, & kneeling down to him, & saying unto him, If thou wilt... *“And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, & touched him, & saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.”* The pitiful state of that leper aroused in Jesus’ heart a deep feeling of pity & love. It stirred him; it moved him. His response was immediate & it brought cleansing!

In the original language, the word “compassion” is derived from the root word for bowels. The Greeks regarded the bowels as the place where strong & powerful emotions originated. The Hebrews regarded the bowels as the place where tender mercies & feelings of affection, compassion, sympathy, & pity originated. Being moved with compassion was the direct impetus for at least five of the recorded miracles of Jesus. When compassion moves the church like it moved Jesus, more healings will be wrought, & more souls will be saved.

The gospel according to Matthew tells us in chapter 9 that Jesus went about preaching the gospel of the kingdom, & healing every disease & every sickness among the people. Vs 36 says, *“But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion for them.”* He saw that they were weary & harassed & scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. It was then that he said to his disciples, *The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.*

The purpose of the man Christ Jesus became imbedded in the hearts of the twelve who walked with him. The power behind their commission was clearly shown shortly after his resurrection from the dead. They had assembled behind closed doors, for fear of the Jews, when Jesus came & stood in the midst, & said to them, *Peace be with you.* He showed them his hands & his side. Then he said unto them, *“As the Father hath sent me, so send I you...”* Henceforth they would be his apostles, his sent-forth ones.

That promised endowment of power from on high came on them, as is recorded in Ac 2. They had given themselves to prayer & fasting for seven days, and when they emerged from the upper room, they returned in the power of the Spirit. A great crowd heard them & over a hundred other believers speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. But those of other nationalities heard them speaking in their **own** tongues the wonderful works of God! They were extolling the sublime greatness of God & his mighty deeds. Something, someone, God, was giving them utterance. Devout men were amazed & perplexed, *saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.*

As Peter spoke on behalf of the eleven, well over three thousand were smitten with conviction, & cried out,

Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

The purpose Jesus imparted to the apostles & implanted in their hearts by the baptism of the Holy Ghost must become the under girding purpose of the church in this hour.

The early church was a microcosm of the church of every generation. Let the intent & purpose of God consume you today. God cares for every person; Jesus died for every soul; & the word of God must be preached to every creature.

Spirit-led? Good. Spirit-driven? Better. Which will you choose to be from this time forth?