

Sunday December 10th sermon: "The Holy Ghost's Necessary Work -- Start Giving Thanks Now! (Pt 3)"

Preached at the Lord's Table at Grace Bible Church in Greenwood, MS,  
by John Pittman Hey

Mark 9:14-32; Romans 8:6-9

Jonah teaches us that Salvation Belongs to the Lord!

As Christ explained to Nicodemus, spiritually dead lost people cannot see the kingdom of God unless they are first born again by the power of the Holy Ghost. In fact, it takes a miracle from God for people to believe the Gospel!

Just as God worked a powerful work in the hearts of the people of Nineveh to bring them to believe His word and cry out for mercy, so too it is necessary for the Holy Ghost to work the conversion of poor dead sinners to believe God's word.

When Jesus cast out the demon from the desperate man's son, He emphasized the importance of faith to believe God's word for salvation. Jesus made sure that the complete hopelessness of the son was evident to us all.

Jesus told the poor boy's father that the key to his rescue was faith, but who can believe God's word? Even believers often fail to do so!

The desperate boy's father expressed the dilemma when he cried out to Jesus, "Lord I believe! Help Thou mine unbelief!"

Here is the crucial fact: the Holy Ghost must take away our unbelief if we are to believe Gospel truth and be saved. We must be granted faith by the power of the Holy Ghost's work of conversion in our hearts. Only then, by faith, can we lay hold of the Gospel!

Right after Christ healed the poor son, He taught His disciples how He must be killed by wicked men, and rise again the third day.

But they were very sad, and wouldn't believe Him, even though they had just seen the poor boy's father granted faith to believe Christ's promise, and then seen Christ's power to cast out vile demons from his son.

How can One with such great power be taken and put to death? If He has total power over the material and spiritual world, how can He be killed? And if Christ is killed, how can He save anyone? How can a dead man rescue us from anything?

If all that calamity happens, how can Christ rise again from the grave?

The disciples ought to have cried out to Christ to help their unbelief!

But note well that Christ Himself believed the promises of His Father in Psalm 16, that He would not leave His soul in hell, nor suffer His Holy One to see corruption! God's promises were set forth in Scripture in plain sight, but only the Lord Jesus embraced and believed them then.

Paul taught in Romans 8, that without the Holy Ghost's power working in us, nobody can obey God. The natural man cannot please God.

But if we are in Christ, we have the Holy Spirit working in us, so that we are not condemned, but God's righteousness is powerfully worked in us.

Without regeneration, the natural man is at enmity with God. But the work of the Spirit makes us alive to God, and works obedience in us, and faith to trust in Christ and His Gospel unto salvation.

Without that Holy Ghost work in us, no one can obey, or follow, or believe, or call upon God for mercy.

That's because, as Jonah put it, salvation is of the Lord, and none of us by our own wills, under our own steam, can lay hold of it at all.

Soon, all the things that Christ preached about His Own death and resurrection did take place, vindicating His belief in the Father's promises to Him. Just as His Own Spirit had revealed to David, and Isaiah, and Zechariah, He was put to death, bearing our sins, and making Himself our sacrifice as God's Lamb.

At the last supper, Christ Himself disclosed the purpose of His dying on the cross: to make an offering for His people's sin, and to shed His blood to forgive us of our sins.

But the wicked rulers mocked Christ for His trust in God, and His obedience to God. They demanded that God deliver Christ from the cross if He were really the Son of God.

They thought they were going to prove that Christ's work and faith in God would, right there, be crushed by their own evil machinations with the Roman tyrants. They knew that they had won.

But Christ, in His humanity, was filled with the Holy Ghost, and He knew God's will and did it, and was certain that He would save His people forever at Calvary that very day. He knew God's promise to raise Him up was sure as well.

All the world's scoffing and unbelief could not disturb Christ, and His certainty that His sacrifice would save us all who trust in Him!

At this table, we celebrate what Jesus did for us, and how what was promised to Him of olden times, was shown to be truth: He would not fail nor be discouraged, even though He was sorely distressed more than any man!

When the Lord's people truly celebrate here, it is visible proof of our trust in the sacrifice of Jesus. This is just one way that God helps our unbelief, by bringing us here each Lord's Day to remember the faithfulness and obedience of Jesus, Who went down to the depths of woe to redeem and cleanse us.