

# Marks of the Holy Spirit at Work

## 2 Chronicles 15

For most of us, when we think of the work of the Holy Spirit our minds race to the New Testament, and to the Day of Pentecost when the power of the Holy Spirit was released in the book of Acts, and multitudes of sinners were saved, and added to the church. But we must not forget the truth that the Holy Spirit was at work in the Old Testament as well. One such place is recorded for us in II Chronicles 15.

The historical context tells us that Israel was in great spiritual darkness and apostasy. There was a real need for a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the people. We read about the serious spiritual condition of the nation in verse three, “ Now for a long season Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law.”

Idolatry had over run Judah. Lawlessness abounded everywhere. Enemies threatened the kingdom. Ignorance was rampant. Israel had sunk deep into the mire of moral bankruptcy, and spiritual destitution. What a bleak picture!

King Asa was the ruler, and he had ruled the Southern Kingdom of Judah from between 908-867 B.C. Israel had been divided into two kingdoms, The Northern and Southern kingdoms because of the sin of King Jeroboam. Jeroboam was the first king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. His dynasty would have survived had he not condemned himself, his offspring and his nation by his promotion of idolatry (Egyptian golden calf worship) and false religious practices at shrines in Dan and Bethel.

II Chronicles 14 records that King Asa was returning from his victorious pursuit and defeat of the Ethiopians, and with the spoil of the enemy, when he was met by a prophet of the Lord by the name of Azariah.

This prophet, who is mentioned nowhere else in the Bible, meets the king and his army and encourages the king to go on with the work of reformation in the nation, promising the presence and help of God with him, 2 Chronicles 15:1.

The king inspired with fresh courage, embarks on spiritual reformation in Judah. Asa and his people enter into a solemn covenant with the Lord, to serve him, 2 Chronicles 15:8. The king removes his mother from being queen, destroys his mother's idol, and brings the dedicated things into the house of God, and the effect of this was peace for a long time in Judah, 2 Chronicles 15:16.

How did it change from darkness to light in the nation so quickly? We read in verse 1, “And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded.” The Holy Spirit was at work. He was at work by raising up a true prophet of God who spoke the Word of God. He was at work by working true repentance in the hearts of the people. He was at work in restoring true and vital worship in the nation.

When the Holy Spirit is at work hearts are changed, sin is put away, and lives are transformed. The title of my message today is, Marks of the Holy Spirit at

Work. There are three marks of the Holy Spirit I would like to consider this morning from II Chronicles 15. Marks that we need to see in the church today.

But before we consider the three marks I would like to ask the question, "What is the primary work of the Holy Spirit in the church today? Many Pentecostals would argue the primary work of the Holy Spirit is to help people speak in tongues. Most T.V. evangelists would say the primary work of the Holy Spirit is to heal the sick. But what does the Bible say? The Bible tells us what the primary work of the Holy Spirit is. It has always been and always will be the same work. The Holy Spirit always testifies to the person and work of Jesus Christ.

We read in Acts 5:29-32--"Peter and the other apostles answered, and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey him. "

The apostles saw their witness in connection with the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit's witness is always concerned with presenting Jesus Christ.

1 John 5:6-- declares, "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth."

Since the Spirit is truth, He must bear witness to Christ because Christ is truth (John 14:6). "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

Albert Barnes writes, "The operations of the Holy Spirit are to be regarded as connected with the work of the Redeemer. Thus, all the operations of the Spirit are connected with, and are a part of, the work of redemption."

Therefore the primary work of the Holy Spirit in both the Old and New Testaments testifies about Jesus Christ. Let us consider now the three marks of the Holy Spirit are at work in II Chronicles 15.

## **1. The Holy Spirit raises up prophets who speak God's truth (v.1).**

Not much is known about this man Azariah. The Spirit of God raised up Azariah both to instruct him in what to say, and to enable him to say it plainly and boldly.

His primary message is summarized in verse 2, "And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you." What a solemn promise! What a clear message! If you seek him, he will be found of you!

The same message is declared by Christ in Luke 11:9, "And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

Are you seeking the Lord? Then the Holy Spirit is working in your heart.

Are you forsaking the Lord? Then sin is leading you down a slippery slope of misery, confusion, and ultimate ruin.

The Holy Spirit raised up Azariah to preach the plain, clear, and unadulterated truth.

The Holy Spirit calls men today to preach the same kind of message. Since the Holy Spirit calls men, then the call given to them is **a divine call** from God himself, through which he makes known the men he has chosen to serve in the public ministry in behalf of the church.

Matthew Henry writes, “Azariah set before them the dangerous consequence of forsaking God and his ordinances, and that there was no way of having grievances redressed, but by repenting, and returning unto God. When Israel forsook their duty they were over-run with a deluge of atheism, impiety, irreligion, and all irregularity (v. 3), and were continually embarrassed with vexatious and destroying wars, foreign and domestic, v. 5, 6. But when their troubles drove them to God they found it not in vain to seek him.”

God has called me to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. True and faithful gospel preachers will preach the full counsel of God, which includes God’s love, God’s justice, God’s wrath, man’s sin, man’s depravity, heaven and hell. True preachers warn

people of the dangers of sin. Sin must be taken seriously. Sin must not be ignored. Sin must be avoided and repented of and put away under the blood of Jesus Christ.

Christ died on the cross not because of His sin but because of our sins. Christ died on the cross not for good people but for ungodly sinners.

Christ takes our sins on the cross and in return we receive His perfect righteousness, which if you don't have you can't enter heaven.

Azariah warns the king and people of turning away from the Lord. He also declares a reward in verse 7, "Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded."

The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin but He also convinces us of grace in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit leads sinners to the greatest reward, full and free salvation in Christ. Therefore the prophet exhorts them to "be ye strong." Follow the Lord. Persevere in the face of opposition.



The prophet assures the king and his subjects, “Your work shall be rewarded--What you do in the cause and for the glory of God will assuredly be followed by the happiest results both to yourself and your subjects.”

The Lord says in Mark 9:41, “For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.”

The first thing we see is the Holy Spirit at work by raising up a prophet who speak God’s truth.

## **2. The Holy Spirit leads sinners back to God in true repentance**

We read in verse 8, “And when Asa heard these words, and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he had taken from mount Ephraim, and renewed the altar of the LORD, that was before the porch of the LORD.”

The Holy Spirit was at work, working in the people repentance.

We read in Romans 2:4, “Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?”

What is true repentance?

This question is of great interest to any Christian because people have always been and still are prone to shallow repentance, they are prone to a false repentance.

The modern message of cheap grace, as it's often called, just believe in Jesus, that's all you need to do, the modern message that's often called "easy believism" in fact invites such shallowness and is at 180 degrees from the message of the prophet Azariah. There was nothing about Azariah's message that was easy. There was nothing about Azariah's message that was warm and fuzzy. It was strong, and confrontational. Azariah understood how prone the sinner is to a shallow, superficial repentance that does not save.

True repenters reflect on personal sin. They don't make excuses or blame other people for their sin. They see the ugliness and sinfulness of sin. They feel

the weight of guilt and the shame of sin. They own their sin. They know the pollution of sin in their hearts. They cry out like the publican in Luke 18:13, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” True repenters take sin seriously.

True repenters recognize divine wrath. I am a sinner, and I deserve to receive the wrath of God. My sin has offended a holy and just God, and therefore I deserve to be punished. How few take their sins to themselves! and till they do this, they cannot be true penitents; nor can they expect God's wrath to be averted till they feel themselves the chief of sinners.

True repenters acknowledge no formal religion or any good works of their own can make peace with God. All human merit is renounced. My good works are as filthy rags in the sight of an holy and just God.

True repenters only hope is in clinging to the Cross of Jesus Christ. At the cross, God is satisfied. At the cross, sinners are justified.

That is why Paul writes in I Corinthians 2:1-2, “And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”

Notice in II Chronicles 15:9-11 the link between repentance and sacrifice, “And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon: for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that the LORD his God was with him. So they gathered themselves together at Jerusalem **in the third month**, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa. And they offered unto the LORD the same time, of the spoil which they had brought, seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep.”

A commentator observes, “**the third month was held the feast of Pentecost**. On this occasion, it was celebrated at Jerusalem by an extraordinary sacrifice of seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep, the spoil of the Ethiopians being offered. The assembled worshippers entered with great and holy enthusiasm into a national covenant "to seek the Lord their God . . . with all their heart and with all their soul;" and, at the same time, to execute with rigor the laws which

made idolatry punishable with death (2Ch 15:13; De 17:2-5; Heb 10:28). The people testified unbounded satisfaction with this important religious movement, and its moral influence was seen in the promotion of piety, order, and tranquillity throughout the land.”

Interesting how the work of the Holy Spirit in II Chronicles 15 foreshadows the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost in the book of Acts.

The second thing we see is that the Holy Spirit leads sinners back to God in repentance.

### **3. The Holy Spirit restores true and vital worship.**

We read in verse 16 that the apostasy was removed, “And also concerning Maachah the mother of Asa the king, he removed her from being queen, because she had made an idol in a grove: and Asa cut down her idol, and stamped it, and burnt it at the brook Kidron.”

The Holy Spirit assumes a vital role in Christian worship as the sign of God's work through Christ. The Spirit confirms God's covenant relationship, a prerequisite for acceptable worship. His presence creates the worship sanctuary, forming the bounds of its community and unifying its members.

By convicting of sin, he ensures the integrity of the covenant worshipers and with his gifts he strengthens them to serve one another.

Clay Layfield has written a paper entitled, "The Role of the Holy Spirit in Worship. He writes, "Sadly, many churches deemphasize a Christ-centered, Spirit-filled worship service and choose rather to emphasize the experience of the worshiper as the evidence of the Spirit, often leading to misunderstanding, pragmatism, narcissism and an idolatry of self rather than the worship of God."

The Holy spirit is the hidden cohesive, the very life-breath of the New Testament witness and church. One cannot study the Scriptures for any length time without noticing the importance given to the Spirit for God's people.

His role is central to understanding proper manifestations of Christian life and worship for today's believer. The first thing we must understand is that the Spirit has a primary role in making His people worshippers.”

We read in John 6:63 that it is the Spirit who gives life. The Spirit opens the blind eyes so that sinners can see Christ and opens deaf ears so that sinners can heed God's own call. The Spirit softens hardened hearts so that they turn to faith in Christ; bends the stubborn will to surrender to Christ; renews life so that Christ can enter in. He makes believers his own, incorporates them into the body of Christ.

The Spirit's work is to build a body of believers bound together through the faith of Jesus Christ. The existence of the church, both local and universal is attributed to the work of the Spirit, and this was what the Holy Spirit was doing in II Chronicles 15.

Not only is the Spirit active in making worshippers, the Holy Spirit shapes the Church and her life. He is the link between the Risen Christ and those who believe, drawing them together, empowering them for obedience and service.

Mr. Layfield writes, “The Spirit insures that Christ is not a mere memory, but a living person whose love and power draw the response of love and obedience from those who hear and heed the Gospel.”

The New Testament shows us that the Spirit is the author of Scripture and that in worship, the Spirit does not guide or direct us away from Scripture, but always refers us to Scripture which he reveals to believers.

We read in 2 Peter 1:21, “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

A.W. Pink writes, “When the Holy Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto His people, in thus making them known to the soul He uses nothing but what is written. While it is true that Christ is the key to the Scriptures, it is equally true that only in the Scriptures do we have an opening-up of the ‘mystery of Christ.’

The third thing we see is that the Holy Spirit restores true and vital worship.



In closing, the marks of the Holy Spirit at work are evident in II Chronicles 15. The Holy Spirit raises up prophets who preach God's truth. The Holy Spirit leads sinners back to God in true repentance. The Holy Spirit restores true and vital worship. Most important, the Holy Spirit testifies to the person and work of Jesus Christ. Is the Holy Spirit evident in your life? Do you have the marks of the Holy Spirit? May we continue to ask the Holy Spirit to help us in our walk with Christ. Let us pray.