

‘Poplar trees by flowing streams’

The work of the Holy Spirit in His church

“I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground: I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring and My blessing on your descendants. They will spring up like grass in a meadow, like poplar trees by flowing streams”

[Isaiah 44.3f]

This short series of studies looks at some significant aspects of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of Christ’s church, as He brings into being and nurtures a new community of faith which anticipates the glory of the age to come.

You can find the background to this series [here](#).

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4. Acts 20.17-21.16 [w/b Sunday 10th June 2018]

“.. compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem ..”

The Holy Spirit gives gifts (as He determines - 1 Cor.12.14), and appoints to particular responsibilities and ministries: and He also sends His people out into the global mission of Christ. It's that facet of His work in the church which this study considers.

Luke, the author of Acts (as well as his gospel record), consistently highlights the work of the Holy Spirit: He is the one who gloriously orchestrates the ongoing progress of the gospel.

[There may not be time for all the questions to be addressed in your Community Group - but try and ensure that in this study you cover questions 4, 5 and 6. As always try to leave good time for shared prayer - and let the passage inform your praying together!]

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1. **Read Acts 20.17-21.16.** We looked at the first part of this passage last time - but in that study our focus was on the eldership: here we'll be looking at the role the Holy Spirit plays in the essentially global mission of Jesus.

From a reading of this passage, in what ways does the Holy Spirit play a significant part in the mission of Christ's church?

Read Acts 9.10-19: have you been conscious of the Holy Spirit 'compelling' you to go somewhere or to someone?

2. Read John 20.19-23. The church is a body of women and men on a mission: a *sent* people, with a commission entrusted to them by the risen Lord Himself.

How true is it to say that the mission on which we're sent is a continuation of the mission of Jesus?

What was that mission on which Jesus was sent by the Father?

Why is their receiving the Holy Spirit so crucial to the experience of forgiveness which others will have through them?

3. Read Acts 1.1-8. Jesus Himself insisted that His disciples could and should not undertake the mission on which He sent them without the Holy Spirit coming on them.

What is the particular ministry which the followers of Jesus are sent to exercise?

Read 1 Pet.2.9: what does Peter mean when he says that we are, as followers of Jesus, to declare God's praises?

4. Read Acts 20.22. Paul speaks of the part which the Holy Spirit played in his going (back) to Jerusalem: in a real sense, his whole ministry was lived under the compulsion of the Holy Spirit.

What do you think Paul means when he says that he was *'compelled by the Spirit'* to go to Jerusalem?

Read Acts 13.1-11: Saul (as he was called then) and Barnabas were clearly 'sent .. by the Holy Spirit' (13.4) - how did it become clear to them and the church at Antioch that this was the call of the Lord by His Spirit?

How might this sort of call from the Spirit into a wider mission field be heard today by not just the individuals concerned but the church as a whole?

5. Read Acts 20.23 & 36-38. Paul was conscious of the 'costliness' of the work on which he was sent: he alludes to the intimations he'd received along those lines from the Holy Spirit.

What are some of the costs involved in mission?

Read Acts 21.1-16: how do you square the Spirit compelling Paul to go to Jerusalem (20.22) with the disciples at Tyre urging Paul, 'through the Spirit' not to go to Jerusalem (21.4) and Luke and others pleading with him not to go to Jerusalem on the back of Agabus' prophecy (21.10-12)?

6. Read Acts 20.18-24. In these verses we are given a good idea of the substance of Paul's preaching, the message he was sent to declare.

How would you describe the 'good news of God's grace' (20.24) we are sent out into the world to share?

Read v.21 carefully: how many important truths can you detect packed into this concentrated summary of what Paul declared (there are a lot!)?

7. Read Acts 20.32-38. It's important for us all, as we are sent out variously by the Lord, that we know the support of our fellow believers: these verses help us see what that looks like.

What different sorts of support (for Paul himself and for the Ephesian elders) are suggested by these verses?

How can we improve the way we support our missionaries - and one another as we're sent out week by week?