

Holy Spirit

Seeking to bring clarity amidst confusion is a precarious task! Requested to offer a teaching series on the Holy Spirit, my tenure in the Kingdom of Tonga proved intriguing. The gospel of Christ has resided in the islands for nearly two hundred years. It has served as a prominent feature of culture and life most of that time. Yet, as time passes tradition ossifies. There is a fine line between what anchors us, and what shackles us. In this context, the Holy Spirit is, one might reasonably speculate, infrequently mentioned, and even less experienced.

In response to that void, a number of new Christian groups have sprung within the nation. These fellowships offer life and vitality, spontaneity and excitement; yet doctrine and practice regarding the Holy Spirit sometimes wanders far afield. On occasion, outstripping clear teaching in Scripture!

In that setting, I began my invited and requested tenuous teaching endeavor. Nightly attendance was strong, faithful, and attentive. Assuming the majority were quietly pondering and processing material, I trusted the Lord for lasting results. Two responses however, bear mention. After one meeting, a stately woman who attended only a single night, approached and in clear terms shared her disagreement with specific parts of the teaching. Her basic premise stated that personal experience in the Spirit should not be constrained by Scripture, and that certain television preachers (who had strategically remained unnamed) are above question. Her pointed remarks were received with outward courtesy.

On a successive evening an articulate young woman related the refreshing and fulfilling effect the teaching on God's Spirit was providing her life. She indicated that she was openly sharing with coworkers and friends. Now, she was sharing the same with me! Encouraging, indeed! What particularly caught my ear however, was when she indicated, "This *new* teaching is great!" I was a bit saddened to hear that substantive and basic biblical instruction on the Holy Spirit was deemed new.

The challenge for the sensitive exercise of bringing clarity on the redemptive ministry of God's Holy Spirit remains. I'm up for task. How about you?