

“Conversations with Harry Reeder and Bruce Stallings”

Part Twenty Seven

September 27, 2020 • Sunday Evening

We so appreciate all the questions that are being sent. They are really insightful and many of them have to do with the series we are currently in on the Apostles' Creed. We are looking forward to continuing to answer all the questions we receive. This Q & A is in place of our Sunday evening services due to pandemic but we are grateful we have been able to have input to our state governor and state representatives on why it's important the church maintain ministry, not be targeted or shut down. Unlike other states our governor has been very supportive and to quote her 'It is the church's confirmed constitutional rights to meet and it's essential in its ministry.' We seek to be effective for Christ who is our King and serve Him in our church as good citizens but maintaining our ultimate and complete allegiance to Christ our Lord. So I'd like to start with a devotional thought before we start the Q & A time.

In the Lord's Prayer or the prayer Jesus uses to teach the Disciples how to pray, Jesus makes a statement that He models in His prayer in the Garden. It is a glorious statement. The statement is that the will of God be done on earth as it is in heaven. When Jesus prays 'Father, if there is any way this cup can pass from Me' in the fervency of prayer to the point that His capillaries were bursting where sweat and blood were mingled together for He would have to drink the cup of the unmixed wrath of God for all the sins of all of His people for all of eternity. Many of us make this same comment. Why do we have to be saved through the atoning death of Christ, is there not another way? The answer to Jesus in His humanity, in that prayer was 'No, there is not another way' and Jesus in that request said 'Not My will be done, but Thy will be done.' There He models for us in His perfect humanity how we pray about anything and everything.

Philippians 4:6 says *[6] do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.* Just think about what Jesus is modeling for us to bring that particular request to the Father, but then it models for us what it already taught us is that 'not my will be done but Thy will be done.' One of my favorite Latin phrases is *Deo volente* which means *God willing*. In many letters, particularly in the South when they would write about what they were going to do they would call upon that phrase in the book of James that says 'if the Lord wills.'

So when we say 'praying according to God's will' what do we mean? This requires more treatment I can give in this devotional but I just want to give you an essential nugget around it. God's will is twofold. There is His revealed will and there is His secret will. When do you know God's revealed will? It is when you look into the Word of God. So God's Word taught and preached allows us to knowledgably pray according to God's will. When you study, pray and know God's Word then whatever you're praying about comes, you can frame it from what you have learned from the precepts of God's Word as to how you ought to pray about it.

There is another aspect to God's will which is His secret will and when do you know His secret will? It is when it's no longer secret, when He has made it manifest. We call that God's providence. I remember when I was putting my wife through school and needed jobs I had one offer here and another there and now I knew what God's secret will was so now I needed to pray Biblically about what choice I should make so that my choice doesn't bring me into conflict with God's Word as to how I ought to live my life.

With God's revealed will we pray with conformity and with God's secret will we pray with contentment. God has three answers when He answers our prayers – yes, no and keep praying. Then fervently we conform our prayer requests to God's revealed will, His Word and we are content with God's secret will as He is at work in our life and we trust Him as our Father. He may be saying to us to keep on praying for we're making progress as you pray about this and we have this dialogue – Him speaking to you from His Word as the Spirit of God illuminates it to you and you speaking to Him in the power of the Spirit as you bring anything and everything before Him. Then trust Him in terms of how He will answer that in His secret will as He has taught you how to pray about it in His revealed will. That's what we mean when we pray following Jesus – not my will be done but Thy will be done.

What kind of will? It is God's glorious will – revealed and secret – that it be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Bruce: As you were walking through the conformity and contentment, I think of almost every topic so far that we have done in our 70 days of prayer where both of those categories would be represented in my prayers. Often times we put passages of Scriptures next to those subtopics but then I have that other list of trying to identify that secret will of the Lord and being content with that. It is a great perspective for us as we go through these 70 days of prayer.

The first question comes from the Apostles' Creed series. All Christians, true believers are members of the invisible church, the holy catholic church but what about the ramifications or the implication for Christians in terms of the visible church, what does it mean in regards to the local church?

Harry: The church invisible is made up of all believers. If you're a believer you're a member of the holy catholic church. So here are some members of that church, your church – Abel, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley. Now in local churches all these people weren't found in the same churches. The local church is our attempt to manifest a commitment to the foundation of the church (holy catholic), the invisible universal church that is made up of all believers from all stations of life which include those who are dead who are enrolled in the triumphant invisible church and those who are living who are manifesting their relationship with Christ by enrolling in the militant church, that is the church that is serving Christ on mission, on message, and in ministry. So if you are a believer you are a member of all of God's elect in the holy catholic church because the Lord resides in His holy catholic church.

This is manifested in local church so you want to be a part of a church that is seeking to be faithful to the foundation of the church – the Word of God, the cornerstone of the church which is Jesus Christ, the purpose of the church – the Great Commission, the culture of the church – the Great Commandment. You are a vital participant in it. The expectation in the Bible is that if your membership is in the holy catholic church because you're a believer in union with Christ and Christ is in you, then you will seek out a local Bible believing church. The local church is holy in that it belongs to Christ but it is not holy in perfection. Only the holy catholic invisible universal church is holy in perfection – the saints made perfect in Christ in eternity.

We are saints that are legally perfect in Christ and His righteousness but we have not yet attained perfection in soul and body. That awaits our enrollment in the church triumphant. But we are to manifest the work of the church in a local church.

So what is the church made up of? It is made up of saints – sinners saved by grace that are now counted as saints in the perfection of body and soul. So what about the local church

here, the visible church? It is made up of sinners, that is those who are yes saved from their sins but they are still dealing with sin and being perfected as God is growing us in grace. We are also called saints in the Bible. Paul wrote to the saints by addressing the church in Philippi (Philippians 1:1), in Thessalonica, and Ephesus. So we are positionally saints being perfected by grace and then we who are in the holy catholic church who are at work in the church militant visible, are brought to heaven, then we will be perfected in body and soul.

The expectation here is, if you're a member of the church universal, the holy catholic church, you seek to be a member among the flock of God which He purchased with His own blood manifested in this world. When Paul wrote his letters to the church he expected any believer to be under the authority of the church, be disciplined and using their gifts in concert and in membership with. Hebrews 10:24-25 says [24] *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, [25] **not neglecting to meet together**, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.* We unite as believers when we say our Lord is Lord, our faith is in Christ, Christ is in us and we are indwelt by the Spirit of God.

We see this in Paul's writings to the church at Corinth. I Corinthians 3:16-17 says [16] *Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? [17] If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.* He not only dwells in you but in the church universal.

Bruce: Years ago I remember you making a statement in one of your sermons that I later asked you about and that statement you made was 'not all the gifts exist in any one church.' I was very pragmatic about this for I thought Briarwood was a pretty big church and I could name a lot of different people with a lot of different gifts and others wonder why you would make such a strong statement as that. Your answer was 'if all the gifts existed in any one local, visible church then we would have no need for the other churches, for the invisible church.' So can you speak to the connectivity of local church to the universal church?

Harry: That is why I believe our church government is Biblical. The local church united to churches in a region, in the Bible, is called a Presbytery. As these churches are represented by the college of elders that come from those churches and then there will be a general assembly of the church which we find in Acts 15. If we hold to a common confession we should not be trying to be a lone ranger church. I do not believe in independent Christians.

If you are a believer and you are not a member of a local body that is attempting to be faithful to Christ, I believe you are being disobedient to God's Word. I believe you are actually telling Jesus that you don't need Him. If you need Him He says you not only need Him but you are not to forsake the assembling of yourselves together because you need one another to encourage one another, to disciple one another, and shepherd one another. If I refuse to become a committed member under the assembly of believers, then I'm telling elders that I don't need shepherding. We as elders can't go shepherd someone until they become members.

I Peter 5:2-3 says [2] *shepherd the flock of God **that is among you**, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; [3] not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.* People aren't among us unless they volitionally say they are among us. Then we try and shepherd to the best of our ability. It will be imperfect but we'll intentionally try to shepherd, disciple, and provide ministry in your life. There are many who say they need that but they aren't going to make a

commitment. In other words, they are not going to be committed to the other people in that church but they expect them to be committed to them. That is so antithetical to the call of Christ.

I Corinthians 12:12-13 says [12] *For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. [13] For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.* When we come to Christ we are baptized into the body of Christ and that's the church universal. Therefore you want to make it manifest in local churches which are manifestations of the body of Christ. They need you and you need them, because we need Jesus and Jesus works in our lives through each other and the means of grace that has been deposited within the church of Jesus Christ.

In the Bible many times we see when one comes to Christ they are baptized along with their household and they are added to the church of Christ.

Bruce: The next few questions have to do with your sermon on the Holy Spirit. What is the baptism of the Holy Spirit? What do people mean by the second baptism of the Spirit for I cannot find anything in the Bible about a second baptism?

Harry: There is not anything in the Bible about a second baptism. I do believe there are multiple anointings. Jesus says in the Bible that when they deliver you up that He will give you what and how to say it. I believe at certain moments of life the Holy Spirit anoints you for that moment, that challenge, that opportunity. I also believe there are multiple fillings of the Holy Spirit. Not only is the Holy Spirit progressively working in your life to make you more like Jesus for I know now I think more like Jesus than I did 20 years ago and it's not because I've become better but it's because the Holy Spirit has been working. Filling means He is filling up the space in your life and taking control so that you have self-control. It's not I control myself but my self is controlled by the Holy Spirit which is why self-control is the summation of the fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22-23 says [22] *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, [23] gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.* So there are anointings in ministry opportunities and there are fillings in sanctification as we are progressively growing in becoming more like Christ.

What about the baptism of the Spirit and not seeing it in the Bible? It is because it's not in the Bible. There is nothing in the Bible that says 'the baptism *of* the Holy Spirit.' There is a baptism in the Holy Spirit, baptism with the Holy Spirit and baptism by the Holy Spirit. There is a Greek preposition that is translated in, with or by.

There is a great text in Matthew 3 where John the Baptist is dealing with the people who have come to see him about what he is doing. Matthew 3:7-12 says [7] *But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? [8] Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. [9] And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. [10] Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.*

[11] *"I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. [12] His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."*

The reason I make a big point of this is because the Holy Spirit doesn't baptize anybody. The Holy Spirit is the One with whom Jesus baptizes His people. All of His people are baptized with the Holy Spirit who seals and secures. Now are there times you don't have the felt presence of the Holy Spirit? Yes and that is what David is saying in Psalm 51:11 when he says *[11] Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.* If you're a believer you have a baptism of Christ with the Holy Spirit which is a once and for all. There are multiple anointings and multiple fillings but there is one baptism with the Holy Spirit. When you were baptized with the Holy Spirit that is the seal and security, the down payment of the promise that God has saved you, is saving you from the practice of sin and one day will save you from the presence of sin and bring you to Himself. So you have been baptized in, with and by the Holy Spirit.

According to Matthew 3, Jesus will baptize everyone and some will be baptized with the Spirit, those are the elect of God (believers) who will be gathered together in the new heavens and the new earth (Christ's barn) and some (unbelievers, the chaff) will be baptized with fire. That is not the fire of excitement for Jesus. That chaff will be burned up which is referring to the judgment of God and a place called hell. Either He will pour out judgment upon you at the last Day therefore the judgment of eternal condemnation/hell or you will go to the new heavens and the new earth because the believer has been baptized with the Spirit of God. This is why Jesus said to His Disciples after He had ascended to heaven to go and pray for He was going to baptize them with the Spirit of God so that they will have power and be His witnesses.

So what is the evidence of being baptized by the Spirit of God? It is not tongues for that was for a specific purpose. It is not any gifts of the Spirit and yes you are gifted by the Spirit but that's not the evidence/sign. Jesus has given us the two evidences of being baptized with the Holy Spirit secured and sealed by Him. One of the evidences is that you have power from the Spirit of God for you are no longer dead in your sins, you're alive in Christ, filled with the Spirit of God. The second evidence is that you become witnesses. If you want to know whether a church or believer is baptized with the Spirit then you will see steadfastness, perseverance, the fruit of the Spirit and you see them specifically making much of Jesus.

The Holy Spirit did not come to make much of us but to set us free to make much of Jesus. The Holy Spirit didn't even come to make much of Himself. He came to make much of Jesus through us. Spirit-filled Christians proclaim and live Jesus and the Gospel in word and deed.

Bruce: We have a phrase that gets used a fair amount and that is 'I'm out of the Spirit' and the questioner is asking for clarity on what that actually means.

Harry: I don't use that language because I don't think you are 'out of the Spirit' but you can quench the Spirit and grieve the Spirit. So when that phrase – out of the Spirit – is used historically among the professing church it is usually referring to someone being disobedient to the Lord or neglected His Word or embraced something in their life that the Word of God says not to, etc. God's Spirit always works with the Word so if I'm walking against the Word then I'm walking against the Spirit. This is the way I quench and grieve the Spirit. Why would the Apostle Paul tell us not to grieve or quench the Spirit if you couldn't do that? That doesn't mean you send Him away but you send yourself away from His felt presence and have said 'no' to His power, 'yes' to yourself. In that context/moment in life you have said 'no' to the One that the Spirit says you need to follow, love and obey which is Jesus. You have decided that there is

something else you want to love more than Jesus and that is not of the Spirit. So I like the old language of don't quench the Spirit or don't grieve the Spirit.

Bruce: So the next question goes along with this, what does 'walk in the Spirit' or 'abide in the Spirit' mean?

Harry: That is the flip side. You abide in the Spirit when you get where the Spirit of God is at work. He is at work in His church. He is at work in worship. He is at work among His people. He is at work when you do ministry. He is at work when you know, hear and share the Word of God. The Spirit of God is always at work with the Word of God.

Whenever you are in the means of grace – the preaching of the Word, the sacraments that display the Word, baptism, the communion of the saints – now you are walking in the Spirit. You are where the Spirit of God is at work. There are people I learn from so I want to be under their influence. For the believer, our Teacher, Comforter, Counselor, Empowerer, Enabler, is the Holy Spirit and He works with the Word and His people. So I want to be in the womb of the church. I want to be walking in the Spirit and I want to feed on the Word of God.

When you walk in the Spirit that means you are surrendered to the Spirit and led by the Spirit. As you do this you will be anointed by the Spirit in moments of challenge and you will start bearing increasingly the fruit of the Spirit in life as a way you live your life. Love, joy, and peace is a state of being. Patient, kindness and goodness is your relationship with others. Gentleness, faithfulness and self-control are the internal anchors that the Spirit of God gives you in Christ.

Bruce: The picture I often times have in my mind is being yoked to the Spirit and I'm not the lead bull. I am the following bull and I can tell as I'm growing in sensitivity to the Spirit when I'm resisting the Spirit and when I'm in step, following His lead.

Harry: In light of that, I'd like to address the unpardonable sin – blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has come to bring you to Christ. If you attribute anything to the Holy Spirit other than surrendering to His call to Christ then you are committing the unpardonable sin. Why is it unpardonable? It is because it is saying 'no' to Jesus. That means you are denying and rejecting the only One who can give you pardon for sins and that's why it's the unpardonable sin. It is not whether you said the Holy Spirit's name right or not. I appreciate those sensitivities because I believe our language is way too thoughtless and coarse today but it's more than just grieving or quenching the Spirit as a believer who has been baptized with the Spirit. What you are doing as an unbeliever is saying 'no' to the Holy Spirit who is telling you to come to Christ and when you're not coming to Christ you're not coming to the only One who can forgive you, therefore it's an unpardonable sin.

Bruce: Our adversary is going to try and destroy, confuse and create division around who the Holy Spirit is and His role in our life, things like the unpardonable sin, to turn us away from the Lord.

So a question came to us about the lost tribes of Israel. What do you think happened to the lost tribes of Israel and where do you think they went?

Harry: As God began His covenantal work of grace He began it with a covenanted nation but that nation said 'no' and therefore God's promised discipline came which He said through Moses; 'I will bring upon them through nations that are not covenanted nations My discipline.' We see in the Bible how God used Egypt, Assyria, Babylonian Empire, Medo-Persian Empire and in the days of Jesus the Roman Empire. We see the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD after the ascension of Jesus. That is how the tribes of Israel got lost.

God is not through with them for I think the book of Romans is abundantly clear that the Gospel that came to us through Israel and has gone to believers from all the nations, now through the believers in the church is going to come back to the Jewish people. I believe there is and will be even more, of revival of Gospel work among the Jewish people which is why Paul says to take the Gospel to the Jew first. I do not believe that means that God is going to go back and reestablish the temple, the sacrifices, etc. for those were shadows. We have the fulfillment in Christ.

So when did they get lost? Ten tribes got lost in the Assyrian captivity and they either amalgamated into the Gentile nations or taken away in slavery and dispersed. Some of those who were dispersed become believers in the New Testament as we see that the book of Hebrews was written to them. They have maintained some Jewish identity out among all the nations but they are no longer in the land of promise. Those who were amalgamated became known as Samaritans in Samaria where they intermarried with the Assyrians and later the Babylonians and then in a very pronounced way they intermarried with the Greeks which is why much of that area became known as Galilee of the Gentiles.

Then the two tribes of Benjamin and Judah were taken off into slavery into Babylon and then in slavery with the Medo-Persian Empire for God's prophesied time of 70 years. Then there was a return which was probably 20,000 to 40,000 people. There were three deportations and three returns in that 70 years. So then these two tribes were amalgamated and dispersed. They also became objects of the work of the Gospel in those letters that were sent to Jewish converts throughout all of the world. Then the third dispersal of the tribes of Israel came in the judgment of 66 to 70 AD when the Roman Empire destroyed Jerusalem and the temple. Then in their slavery, political persecutions and targeting dispersed throughout the world.

Then finally the dispersal of the lost tribes came through the evidences of God as He brought occupying nations into Israel over the next 1800 years. Now we have seen an opening up of ethnic Jewish population that have come back to Israel since 1948. Sacrifices won't be brought back due to the fact there is no tribe of Levi and in the Old Testament you couldn't have sacrifices without that tribe but most of all you don't go back to the shadows. That was the abomination of desolation for after Jesus had fulfilled the sacrifices they reinstated the sacrifices and then God brought a final end to it as He did in 66 to 70 AD.

Bruce: This past week on Thursday in our 70 days of prayer we were to be praying for Pastor Harry Reeder. So what did it feel like to have some 4300 people praying for you and two, who do you pray for on the day that it says Pastor Reeder?

Harry: I was overwhelmed to be thinking so many people would be praying for me. Many people sent me some kind of communication that day. It was such a blessing and I really had the felt presence of the Lord in a very special way. It was abundantly clear and overflowing to me. I have heard people say when someone had told them they prayed for them that they felt it and that was me on that day. I am thankful for that and for the commitment our members make at one

meal a day to pray for the leadership of the church, the preaching of the Word and the pastor but that concentrated prayer on that day made me emotional that whole day.

The next question was who I prayed for on that day, well, I sensed that I needed to pray for other pastors on that day, but I spent most of that day actually praying for myself – that I would be a stalwart of the faith, win people to Christ, equip the people of God and found faithful with my lifestyle stewardship with my gifts and calling in the Lord. To know that so many are praying for the leadership and pastor during this time, I feel so unworthy. I prayed that the Lord would help me to continue to know I'm unworthy but for Him to help me walk in a manner worthy as a man, husband, father, grandfather and as a pastor. Finally, I have a sense that there is a gigantic battle that we are in and that it is going to get even bigger for the souls of men and women around the world, but also in this nation (US). I am asking the Lord to help me be faithful and to lead Briarwood because I know this congregation wants to be faithful.

We want to fight this fight not with the weapons of death, self-reliance and this world but with the weapons of the Spirit and life and the armor of Christ. Help me be an example of that and an instrument in His hands for God's people so that we can stay in the fight because this is for the souls of men and women, the Gospel of the Kingdom and the King of Kings, Jesus Christ, that He would be lifted up and draw men to Himself.

Bruce: I know a good portion of my prayers for that day for you were just thanksgiving for you, your leadership, faithfulness to the Lord and a heart for His people. That is all we have time for in this Q & A session. I want to encourage you to continue in the 70 days of fervent prayer and I want to encourage you to continue to send your questions to askthepastor@briarwood.org and we'll look forward to answering them. God bless you.