

(Preceded by the skit, "Guardianship 101")

Our guardian angel in the skit brings up a good point about the way the Holy Spirit works. The Spirit doesn't always work the same way for every person. In our skit the woman is quite responsive and the man is quite clueless. However, the thickness of your head does not affect the way the Spirit works in you.

I think we want the Spirit to reveal the will of God to us in dramatic ways. We read texts like the one we had from Acts where the Spirit came upon the disciples with fire and noise and all sorts of drama. Indeed the Spirit can work that way. But the Spirit can also work many other ways. In the movie *Amazing Grace*, there's a line said by John Newton who wrote the hymn *Amazing Grace*, "Sometimes the Spirit works like a lightning bolt. And sometimes the Spirit works on you like a drip. Drip, drip, drip."

I'm reminded of Proverbs 27:15, "A continual dripping on a rainy day and a contentious wife are alike..." Let's not underestimate the tendency of God to work on us in this dripping fashion. It is a slow ongoing gnawing feeling that just won't leave you content until you give in.

Perhaps along these lines we could ask what makes us angry? And I'm not talking about issues regarding how much air pressure is in a football. What wrongs, injustices, or injuries do you see that consistently make you angry? Perhaps its environmental degradation, or exploitation of the poor, or racial inequalities. These things that anger us can be the working of the Spirit goading us to act.

And the Spirit's revelation aren't a once and done thing. We have a pretty amazing scene in that reading from Acts. Not only do you have all the miraculous things going on, but you have Peter, for the first time standing up and confidently preaching. His faith is strong. He is sure. But that's not the end of the story. We're reading from Acts chapter 2. There's 28 chapters in Acts, and we meet Peter over and over again. We discover that he still makes plenty of mistakes. He doesn't understand everything. And the Spirit still has to work on him through dreams, miracles, and an ongoing gnawing at his heart. Dr. Richard Carlson, my one seminary professor said the book of Acts reads like the Spirit constantly dragging the disciples forward as they only slowly realize what following Christ really looks like.

Parents of teenagers and adult children often tell me they worry about their children because faith plays no real part in their lives. How do they get them back to church? What did they do wrong as parents that that which was handed on to them for generations beforehand they themselves have been unable to pass on to their children?

Those are complex issues and there are no easy answers. But one thing I think can be said safely. That worry, discontent, and feeling that something really big has gone wrong is the working of the Holy Spirit. It is goading, pushing; not allowing an easy breath until the situation is resolved. Parents know their children well, perhaps better than anyone. They know what works and what doesn't work; what will turn their children on and what will drive them away.

It is the Spirit's call to act and a call for innovation. It is a drive to create new ways of being a person of faith. The Spirit will not give you cut out answers to complex problems. The Spirit will lead you on a path of growth and strength.

Finally, let's turn to the reading from Romans 8. "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not

know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words."

God's Spirit knows you more intimately than you know yourself. The Spirit knows the roots of the motives in your life. The Spirit knows your deepest darkest secrets and your greatest joys. Whether you feel the Spirit working as a lightning bolt, or as a drip drip drip annoying you until you relent, or maybe you don't feel it at all - still, the Spirit knows you and is interceding to God on your behalf with "sighs too deep for words".

Trust the working of the Spirit. I'll almost guarantee that the answers won't be straightforward and the path will be difficult, but God's will is done and you will be made whole.  
Amen