

Sermon on John 7:39, preached on the 12th of January 1926 in the Hague.

John 7:37-53 was read.

Psalm 68:3; Psalm 119:2 and 3; and Psalm 84:6 were sung.

My respected listeners, we wish to place ourselves in the way to speak once more on the words about which we have spoken to you before from John 7. We now wish to speak to you about part of John 7 verse 39: *“The Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive.”*

“The Spirit,” this is the third Person in the divine Being. Listeners, you know that this Person is mentioned in the Holy Scriptures by the name Holy Ghost. “Holy Ghost,” He has this name because of His holy existence in the divine Being. By way of blowing the Holy Spirit goes out from the Father and the Son (Isaiah 40:7).

“Which they that believe, etc.” We receive the Holy Spirit. However, we have to make distinction between the gifts of the Spirit and the Spirit itself. And we shall see, that the Scriptures do this also. Some receive the gift of the Spirit. Others receive the Spirit Himself, although it is true, that the Spirit can never be separated from His gifts. Bazaleel and Aholiab made the tabernacle through the working of the Spirit (Exodus 36). The heart of king Saul was also changed through the Spirit (1 Samuel 10:9).

Sometimes there is a strong similarity between the common gifts of the Spirit in the reprobate, and the saving working of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the elect.

Balaam spoke about Christ, and saw the privilege, salvation and the happiness of the Church, (Numbers 24:2), just like Judas Iscariot, who also preached Christ as did the other disciples (Luke 6:16 and 9:2). It also seemed as if Herod was a friend of John the Baptist, for he often enjoyed to hear John speak, and after he had heard this ambassador from heaven, he often had

deep impressions, so that he did many things and heard him gladly (Mark 6:20).

Very striking are the similarities between the gifts of the Spirit and the saving working with the foolish virgins. These people had so much. They had oil in their lamps, they were amongst the upright, and: "At the cry: Behold the Bridegroom cometh" they also arose just like the wise virgins (Matthew 25:7). And listeners, it would be very hard to say what was missing with these people. We have been taught why this happened, so that we know the reason, and are able to say: that they did not possess Christ Himself. And my hope is, that you know, that when this is lacking, everything is lacking. Your wish is not to be a Christian without Christ is it? If this is your desire, then you are in a dangerous way. Think about the words from Augustine: "Sin has cast many people down, but religion even more." A soul without Christ, is an empty soul. The Lord says that such a soul is unpleasant to Him. If we want to be a Christian without Christ, then the preparative working is completely missing, (now we are not talking of missing saving faith). The Holy Spirit has never tolerated any of the elect to go without this, and He will never do it.

The Church of Christ itself possesses the Spirit. The Word teaches this: "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Romans 8:11). This is clear, and not able to be explained differently.

The Spirit Himself distinguishes the gifts that the elect possesses. For in Romans 5:5 we find: "And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Beloved, take special note of the words: "Which is given unto us." You notice, that a distinction is made between the gifts of the Spirit and the Person of the Spirit. The Person of the Spirit is indispensable for the Church of Christ. The Holy Spirit is the Keeper of the life of

the Church. That is why the Apostle Paul says: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Romans 8:14).

God’s children also consider the Holy Spirit as the One who prays, for: “We know not what we should pray for as we ought,” says the Church, and then she follows on to say: “but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Romans 8:26). The Spirit places the words before us. The Spirit first shows us what we miss, our guilt, and our misery. He comes to lead us into our powerlessness, and into our completely lost state in Adam. And over against that He comes to reveal Christ and His fullness and the riches of His grace. That is why He gives us to pray, like the Apostle says: “with groanings which cannot be uttered.” We find an example of that in the parable of the pharisee and the publican. The publican prayed: “God be merciful to me a sinner!” (Luke 18:13). And if the Spirit did not do this, no one would be able to pray. The Church knows this, that is why she says: “We know not what we should pray for *as we ought.*”

Take note beloved, because when man himself prays, and he has no need of the Holy Spirit, then he does not know himself, he has not seen his utterly pitiful condition, that is, his condemned state; he does not pray to God but to an idol. He is unable to worship God, the foundation of his prayer is mocking God. That is why it says: “He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination” (Proverbs 28:9), and: “The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination to the Lord” (Proverbs 21:27). We have to learn that we are unable to pray “*as we ought to.*” The person who has come to the knowledge of this, will be able to say something about the difference that there is between the works of the Law and the working of the Spirit through the Gospel. We do not obtain the Spirit through the Law, but through the Gospel, so that we are able to say that the great characteristic of a child of God is that he is in possession of the Spirit. That is why a child of God is called a temple, wherein the godhead dwells, one who has the Spirit, for: