

“THE HOLY SPIRIT AND SINNERS”

John 16:7-11

“It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.”

In the previous studies we have concentrated on the following subjects: The Promise of The Holy Spirit; Who Is the Holy Spirit Part #1; Who Is the Holy Spirit Part #2 and the Holy Spirit’s Work In Salvation. I will expand on this last subject in a future lesson as we consider the Holy Spirit’s work in individual saints. In this lesson we will focus upon the Holy Spirit’s work in unbelievers.

God is ever at work in His world on many fronts. With His work at Calvary being completed in providing redemption, God sent His Spirit to awaken those “dead in trespasses and sins.” (Eph.2:1) Only the Holy Spirit could convince Saul, later Paul, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a Pharisee without guile, that he was chief of sinners.

In what ways does the Holy Spirit deal with the unsaved to bring them to see their need of salvation and to ultimately embrace the embraceable Son of God as Savior? The answer is in the statement of the Lord Jesus recorded in John chapter 16. The pre-salvation work of the Holy Spirit is threefold:

I. HE EXPOSES SIN.

The Holy Spirit must work His way through preconceived ideas, evil inclinations, mental distortions and reservations, even blinding and binding influences of religious dogmas to get through to the heart of the sinner’s problem. The malady is that he is a sinner by nature, by birth, by practice and by choice. Before anyone can partake of God’s salvation they must see themselves for who and what they are in the sight of God. Only the Holy Spirit can perform this eye-opening and “open heart surgery.” How does He expose the sinner’s disease? By doing 2 things:

A. BY CHARGING THE SINNER WITH SIN.

John 16:8 “He will convict the world of sin.” Conviction is not possible unless there is a charge. Therefore, the Holy Spirit charges the sinner with being guilty before a Holy God, the Judge of the universe.

What is the charge against the unsaved? “When he comes he will convict the world of sin - of sin, because they believe not on me.” (v.8,9) With what sin are sinners charged with specifically? It is the charge of unbelief – not believing in Jesus Christ for salvation - “of sin, because they do not believe in Me” said Jesus.

Read what the Judge said in another case: “I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.” That was Jesus speaking. (John 8:24-25) The Holy Spirit exposes the sin of not believing savingly in Jesus Christ.

B. BY CONVICTING THE SINNER OF SIN.

Having been charged with the sin of not believing in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit now brings to bear conviction. To convict or convince means: "to prove guilty". It always implies the presentation of evidence. It is a verdict that is legal in character; the verdict results in the fear of God's judgment which is brought to bear heavily upon the guilty party's conscience, resulting in agony of soul.

Note that in verse 7 the Lord Jesus said, “If I do not go away the Helper (or Comforter) will not come to you.” The Holy Spirit comes to bring Comfort to the saved. But look at Verse 8: “When he comes he will convict the world of sin.” That’s uncomfortable to the sinner. The Holy Spirit is given to comfort Christians and to make the sinner uncomfortable! That sense of discomfort is the Holy Spirit doing His work – that work is called “conviction.”

When the sinning person hears the truth of God’s Word there is discomfort – that is the Holy Spirit convicting. That is why a disobedient Christian and a disbelieving sinner tries to avoid hearing the Word of God. For, as the Psalm writer said, “The entrance of the Word gives light.” (Psalm 119:130) The Holy Spirit shines the light on the darkness within us and that is uncomfortable – that discomfort is conviction.

The Holy Spirit exposes the sinner’s sin of not believing in Jesus Christ thus convicting them that he/she is guilty before God. The Holy Spirit not only exposes the sin of unbelief but furthermore,

II. HE EXALTS RIGHTEOUSNESS.

John 16:8 - “And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness” and v.10 “of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no

more.”

A. THE RIGHTEOUS ONE.

When the sinner rejects Jesus Christ he is rejecting the righteousness of God personified in the person of Jesus Christ.. (I John 2:29) Once righteousness walked on earth in the person of the incarnate God-Man. Jeremiah 23:6 reads, “this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

Unrighteous hands crucified the righteous Son of God. Jesus died, was buried and arose ascending back to the Father. “I go to My Father and you see Me no more.” The righteousness which the world rejected has been received into heaven and is enthroned there. What a condemnation of the world of mankind!

B. THE UNRIGHTEOUS ONES.

The Holy Spirit’s work is to convince mankind that they are devoid of righteousness and have rejected The Righteous One. The sentence of God as He looks upon the world is this: “There is none righteous, no not one.” (Rom. 3:10) The Spirit of God reminds the sinner that he has no righteousness and points him to the Lord Jesus Who is our righteousness! The unrighteous can become righteous if they but yield to the ministry of the Holy Spirit as The Word stipulates: “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the

dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” (Romans 10:9-10) Then, “He is made unto us righteousness.” (I Cor. 1:30)

There are 3 garments that mankind wears in God’s sight:

- Fig leaves of self-righteousness - Adam & Eve made them;
- Filthy rags of unrighteousness - “our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” (Isa.64:6);
- Fine Linen of His righteousness - “And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.” (Rev 19:7-8) Which garment do you wear?

We have seen that the Holy Spirit exposes sin, exalts righteousness and in addition:

III. HE EXACTS JUDGMENT.

According to Jesus’ statement in John 16:11- the Holy Spirit convicts the world “of judgment because the Prince of this world is judged.” And v.8 says He comes to “convict the world of judgment.”

For a world that has refused Jesus Christ and has no righteousness of its own, there is but one thing left: “*judgment*” ! Therefore the third convicting work of the Holy Spirit is to drive home to the consciences of mankind the awful fact of an awesome judgment. The question is asked in Heb. 2:3 “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” Of course, the answer is, “we shall not escape.”

What is the meaning of the words: “because the Prince of this world is judged”?

A. THE WORLD’S PRINCE IS JUDGED. v. 11

The devil is judged because of who he is and because of what he does. What does he do in relation to sinners? 2 Cor 4:4 informs us that: “the god of this age has blinded the minds of those who do not believe.”

Do not miss the words, “the Prince of this world *is* judged....” The devil has already been judged. His sentence is yet to be carried out.

B. THE WORLD’S PEOPLE ARE JUDGED.

The point that the Holy Spirit is making is that if the Prince of this world, the devil, has fallen under the judgment of God, how can his subjects escape? Judgment Day is coming! Heb 9:27 “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.”

Some present day ministers of the Word of God have de-emphasized the truth of mankind’s sin, guilt and inescapable judgment. Consequently, there is little or no conviction, and the result is that churches are filled with superficial professions of faith and superficial followers of Jesus Christ. In such cases there is little evidence of

conviction that breaks up the hard ground of the sinner's heart and therefore, the Gospel seed is not received and consequently does not bring forth a change of life.

What does conviction look like? There are several examples of genuine conviction in the New Testament:

In Acts 2:36-37 Peter, preaching on Day of Pentecost said, "God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart." (KJV: "pricked") and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

Sin-hardened Saul, later renamed Paul, is a good picture of a sinner under conviction. God spoke to him on the road to Damascus and this was Saul's response: "he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?"

Another example is recorded in Acts 24:25 - "And as he (Paul) reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come Felix trembled."

In a court of law, the criminal sits before the Judge. The defendant, through his/her lawyer, puts up their very best defense. The jury deliberates, determines the innocence or guilt of the accused party and hands the Judge their written decision. The Judge reads the jury's decision and, bringing his gavel down, pronounces the verdict – "guilty!" striking fear in the criminal. Fear of what? Judgment!

CONCLUSION

Follow closely the progression of the Holy Spirit's work in relation to the sinner:

First, the sinner is charged and convicted in his conscience of the sin of rejecting Jesus Christ;

Second, being found guilty of rejecting the Righteous Son of God as Savior and being devoid of any righteousness himself, the sinner remains in a state of unrighteousness before God;

Third, being unrighteous the sinner must face the Righteous Judge Who has already judged the devil himself.

It is the Holy Spirit who bombards the conscience with these awesome truths. The sinner, when confronted, responds in one of two ways: He is resistant to the Holy Spirit and rejects God's offer of salvation or, He is repentant and receives God's offer of salvation.

Apart from the ministry of the Holy Spirit no person could or would become a child of God. Let us thank God the Holy Spirit for His ministry in bringing us to the Savior and salvation. And, if you have been rejecting Jesus as your Savior, receive Him today.

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