

JESUS' TEACHING ON THE SPIRIT (pt. 2)

Theme: The second half of Jesus' 'upper-room' teaching about the Spirit helps us to appreciate the Spirit's ministry to this world in and through us.

(All Scripture is taken from The New King James Version, unless otherwise indicated.)

Last week, we considered the first three of six great affirmations that the Lord Jesus made concerning the Holy Spirit on the night before He went to the cross, in His 'upper room' discourse (John 13-17). Generally speaking, those first three affirmations had to do with the Spirit's work in us to help us to be the witnesses of the Lord Jesus in this world. We saw that the Holy Spirit is (I.) the Helper of the saints (John 14:15-18); (II.) the Protector of the truth that has been given to the saints (John 14:25-26); and (III.) the Bearer of the witness to that truth along with the saints (John 15:26-27). In this study, we will consider the last three of those 'upper room' affirmations. They highlight the effects of the Holy Spirit's witness through us upon the world.

These next three affirmations are ones that we need very much to hear. We live in a fallen world that is often hostile to the message of Jesus Christ. Knowing these truths concerning the Spirit's ministry, and taking them to heart, will give us the confidence that because of the Holy Spirit's ministry, our faithful witness of Jesus to this world will be made effective.

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In these aspects, the Lord Jesus highlighted the Holy Spirit as ...

IV. THE CONVICTOR OF THE WORLD.

- A. This truth about the Holy Spirit's work is given to us by the Lord in John 16:7-11. He spoke to His disciples as they were deeply distressed over the fact that He told them that He was leaving them. But to comfort and inform them, He said:

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth. 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” (John 16:7-11).

- B. This, of course, speaks of a specific historic event—the the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2). Jesus was stressing that, though they had come to depend upon His bodily presence, it was far better that He left so that the ministry of the Holy Spirit could begin in and through them. And in saying this, our Lord took the opportunity to explain that the Spirit's coming will help us in overcoming one of the greatest 'road-blocks' we can run into in sharing the good news of Jesus with lost people in this world—and that is their own hardness of heart. How can we—humble and unimpressive folk as we are (see 1 Corinthians 1:26-29)—convince the worldly-wise and self-sufficient people

around us to turn to the Savior when they don't even believe they need to be saved? Thankfully, it's not our job to do so. It's our job simply to bear witness of the crucified Savior to this world in the power of the Holy Spirit; and it's the Spirit's job to convict the hearts of those who hear that testimony with regard to their need for the Savior. The Holy Spirit has the power to transform the inner-most being of needy sinners. He has complete access to the dullest of hearts and darkest of minds. He can enliven even the most silent and muted of consciences.

- C. Jesus here tells us that this 'convicting' aspect of the Spirit's ministry includes some very specific things:
1. Convicting the world of sin. The great 'work' that God calls forth from people is to "believe on Him whom He sent" (John 6:29). And the greatest of all sins is to refuse to believe on Jesus, whom God sent into this world to be our Savior. Jesus here assures us that it's the Holy Spirit's ministry to convict the world of its need for the Savior, and of the sin of rejecting Him.
 2. Convicting the world of righteousness. So long as Jesus walked upon this earth, He was the visible example of a life that pleased God. He was the Word in human flesh (John 1:14). He has, however, ascended to the right hand of the Father and walks this earth in bodily presence no longer. But now that He is gone to the Father, the Holy Spirit is here—dwelling in us; and He continues to convict the world of the righteousness that Jesus Himself displayed upon it.
 3. Convicting the world of judgment. Satan is the ruler of this present world order. He is called "the prince of the power of the air" and "the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2). But as active as he still may be, he has already been judged and is doomed (see Revelation 12:10-12). When we proclaim Jesus in this world, the Holy Spirit convicts the people of this world—those who are aligned with the devil through this world's values and priorities (see 1 John 5:19)—of the judgment to come upon him and upon those who are aligned with him.
- D. Now; we are terribly ineffective in convicting people these things in our own power. All we ever end up doing is offending people and hardening their hearts even further. But the Holy Spirit is able to reach in the most hard-hearted man or woman—down to the deepest core of their inner being where no one else is able to reach—and bring them to such great conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment, that they cry out for the the saving grace God provides through His Son. How important it is then that we do our work of proclamation, and trust the Holy Spirit do His work of conviction!

Jesus also taught that the Holy Spirit is ...

V. THE GUIDE ALONG THE WAY.

- A. This particular ministry of the Spirit is presented to us by our Lord from John 16:12-13):

"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come" (John 16:12-13).

- B. Jesus couldn't tell the disciples everything that He wanted to tell them while He was on earth. Nor could they have grasped it all if He had. But there would be no reason for

concern. Jesus would be sending "the Spirit of truth" to the church; and the Spirit would serve as a faithful guide in those things that Jesus wanted His followers to know and teach.

C. We can think of this aspect of the Spirit's ministry in a two-fold way:

1. There's a positive aspect to the Spirit's guiding ministry. The apostles were given the foundational teaching that Jesus wanted His church to possess (see Ephesians 2:20); and this body of truth has been recorded for us forever in the Scriptures. And once that this foundational truth had been fully given—just as Jesus has promised—the Holy Spirit has guided His people throughout the centuries in studying the Scriptures and applying the things that Jesus would want them to know. He would guide His church into "all *the* truth" (as the original text has it); that is, all the foundational truths that had been given to the apostles for the church—"the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). The Spirit would even tell them "things to come"; that is to say, He would reveal the unfolding of God's plan for the ages that will culminate in the return of Jesus to this earth; such as we find told to us in 2 Thessalonians 2, or 1 Corinthians 15, or in the Book of Revelation.
2. There's also a negative aspect to the Spirit's guiding ministry. He also protects His people from false doctrine and error. Have you ever heard a preacher on the radio or on television, or have you ever read a book that said it was "Christian", and felt as if there was just something not right about what you were hearing or reading?—as if there was a red 'warning' light going off in your inner being? When we are faithful to heed God's word as a habit of life, the Holy Spirit will also gently warn us and guide us away from error. As the apostle John wrote; "These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you. But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him" (1 John 2:26-27).

D. How lost in the fog of this world's deceitful ideas and false doctrines we would be if it weren't for the faithful ministry of the Holy Spirit—guiding His church in accordance with the Scriptures! If we trust the guiding ministry of the Holy Spirit, and faithfully and diligently study God's word with reliance on Him and according to sound principles of interpretation, we will never go far astray.

VI. THE GLORIFIER OF THE SON.

A. Our Lord also taught His disciples about this wonderful work of the Spirit in John 16:14-15:

"He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you" (John 16:14-15).

B. The Holy Spirit's focus in His ministry on this earth is never toward Himself. Any supposed ministry that professes to be from the Holy Spirit, but that ends up turning all the attention upon the Holy Spirit Himself, is something that is not a ministry from the Holy Spirit. And this is because the Holy Spirit has been sent to this earth to shine the spotlight on Jesus.

C. As Jesus Himself here teaches us, the first Person of the Trinity (that is, the Father) has given all things over to the second Person (that is, the Son). The Father has called our attention to Jesus. And the the third Person (that is, the Holy Spirit) takes the things that the Father has given to Jesus and reveals them to us. Just as the Father glorifies the Son in heaven, so the Holy Spirit glorifies the Son in this world. Therefore, if we have truly tasted of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, we too will join Him in His ministry of glorifying God's Son in this world.

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These great affirmations that our Lord made about the Spirit are not only to help us in our own personal lives and in the life of our church, but also to help us to take the message of the gospel out into the world. Let's trust His work through us, then, and faithfully point to Jesus!