

Bethany Bible Church; AM Bible Study; June 6, 2018  
The Holy Spirit—Our Helper; Lesson 31; His Helping

# THE HOLY SPIRIT— OUR POWER TO WITNESS

Theme: The Holy Spirit helps us to join Him in His ministry of witnessing of Jesus in this world.

There's much more we could say about the Holy Spirit. But we now close our study of His Person and ministry—and specifically the help that He gives the individual believer—with a lesson on a very practical subject. We consider the ways that He helps the believer to bear witness for the Lord Jesus Christ in this world.

It's a good place to conclude; because it's not just a practical lesson in respect to us as believers. The help that the Spirit provides to us in this area is also very important to Him. It's an application of the ministry that the Lord Jesus said the Spirit Himself would be sent to have on this earth. Jesus told His disciples,

*“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)<sup>1</sup>.*

Just as the Holy Spirit ministers on earth by—as it were—'shining the spotlight' on the Lord Jesus Christ in this world, He wonderfully helps us, as Jesus' redeemed people, to also be shining that spotlight upon Jesus before others who need to see Him.

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So; how does the Holy Spirit help us in our witnessing ministry? First, consider that ...

## **I. HE PREPARES THE HEARTS OF THOSE WHO WILL HEAR OUR WITNESS FOR JESUS CHRIST.**

A. Think back to the story of how the Lord Jesus was about to leave His disciples on this earth, and how He commissioned them to bear a witness for Him. He was departing from them to go back to the Father—leaving them on earth. How would it be that such a seemingly insignificant group of men could convince a sin-hardened world that the Savior of mankind has truly come, and that God offers eternal life to all who trust in Him? It would have been an impossible task for them. But thankfully, it would not be the work of those disciples—nor those of us to follow the Lord Jesus after them—to do such an enormous 'convicting' work. Rather, it would be the work of the Holy Spirit Himself. Jesus told them that it was to their advantage that He was going to leave them;

*“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 16:7b-11).*

- B. Note some important details from these words of our Lord:<sup>2</sup>
1. First, Jesus said that the Spirit would convict the world "of sin, because they do not believe in Me ..." (v. 9). The great 'work' that God the Father calls forth from people is to "believe on Him whom He sent" (John 6:29); and so, the greatest of all sins is to refuse to believe on Jesus, whom God sent into this world to be our Savior. No one will ever be kept out of heaven because they were sinners. Heaven will be filled with redeemed sinners! Rather, it will be because they rejected the only way to heaven; and that is through faith in Jesus Christ, the Savior of sinners. It's the Holy Spirit's ministry to convict the world of its need for the Savior, and of the greatest of all sins—that of rejecting the free gift of salvation through faith in that Savior.
  2. Second, Jesus said that the Spirit would convict the world "of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more ..." (v. 10). So long as Jesus walked upon this earth, He was the visible example of a life that pleased God. Jesus said of the Father, "I always do those things that please Him" (John 8:29). His opponents were unable to counter this claim; because none of them could accuse Him of sin. He was the perfect example of righteousness on earth. And now that He is gone to the Father, the Holy Spirit continues to convict the world of the righteousness that Jesus Himself displayed upon it.
  3. And third, Jesus said that the Spirit would convict the world "of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged ..." (v. 11). Satan is the ruler of this present world order. But he has already been judged and is doomed. When Jesus came into Jerusalem to submit Himself to the cross, He was able to say, "Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out" (John 12:31). And when we proclaim Jesus in this world, the Holy Spirit convicts those who are aligned with this world's values and priorities of the judgment that will come.
- C. It is not the task of us as believers, then, to try to convict the people of this world of these things or of their need for a Savior. Rather, it is simply the task of those of us who are followers of Jesus to proclaim the gospel of Jesus this world—with the confident knowledge that it is the task of the Holy Spirit to cultivate in the people of this world a sense of their need to be saved! It's a good thing, too, that 'bringing about conviction' is not our job. Frankly, we do a terrible job of convicting sinners. But the Holy Spirit does this task perfectly, lovingly, and unto the complete fulfillment of God's appointed result. The great Bible teacher R.A. Torrey—who was also a great evangelist—once wrote;

*We need not despair of any one, no matter how indifferent they may appear, no matter how worldly, no matter how self-satisfied, no matter how irreligious, the Holy Spirit can convince men of sin [sic]. A young minister of very rare culture and ability once came to me and said, 'I have a great problem on my hands. I am the pastor of the church in a university town. My congregation is largely made up of university professors and students. They are most delightful people. They have very high moral ideals and are living most exemplary lives.' 'Now,' he continued, 'if I had a congregation in which there were drunkards and outcasts and thieves, I could convince them of sin, but my problem is how to make people like that, the most delightful people in the world, believe that they are sinners, how to convict them of sin.' I replied, 'It is impossible. You cannot do it, but the Holy Spirit can.'*

*And so He can. Some of the deepest manifestations of conviction of sin I have ever seen have been on the part of men and women of most exemplary conduct and attractive personality. But they were sinners and the Holy Spirit opened their eyes to the fact.*<sup>3</sup>

As Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:10, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." It is the Holy Spirit that providentially prepares the hearts of those He chooses—ahead of our encountering them—to hear and be convicted by the message of the gospel. Just think of how helpless we would be in this 'good work' of bearing a witness for Christ in this world if it weren't for the gracious ministry of the Holy Spirit to prepare the way for us in advance!

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So; that's one way the Holy Spirit helps us in this work. It's a help that He applies to those we talk to. But then, there's the help that He applies to us as the talkers. Consider next that ...

## **II. HE EMPOWERS US TO BEAR THAT WITNESS IN THIS WORLD.**

- A. The hardness of the hearts of sinners isn't the only problem with which we must contend. We're also hindered by our own, personal inability and frailness and weaknesses in bearing an effective witness for Christ. But the Holy Spirit helps us with 'us' as well as with those in the world that we encounter. He is, in fact, the essential power of our witness for Christ. A key scripture passage for this is the one that gives us the promise of our Lord to His disciples after He was raised from the dead, and just before He ascended to the Father. In Luke 24:46-48, Jesus told them that the message of the gospel they would be preaching, and said,

*"Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things" (Luke 24:46-48).*

But they were not to simply run out and declare Him to the world right then and there—as if they were to do this in their own power. He next told them,

*"Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high" (v. 49).*

We're told in Acts 1:8 what the nature of this "power" was when He said to them,

*"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).*

In other words, Jesus taught the apostles that their witness for Him would be effective only after the Spirit had come to them; and that they were to wait for the Spirit to come and empower them.

- B. That is a principle that applies to us as well. Think of it!—if the apostles who were personally trained by the Lord Jesus Himself for three and a half years could not witness for Him apart from the enabling power of the Holy Spirit, then how could we? The proof of the greatness of this aspect of the Spirit's enabling power is shown to us in at least two ways.
1. It's shown in the remarkable difference that occurred in the boldness of the disciples after the Spirit came at Pentecost. Before then, they were fearful and timid in their identification with Christ. Peter himself—who had once boasted that he would die for Jesus—denied that he even knew Him when the pressure was on. But after the Spirit came in Acts 2, the apostles began to testify boldly and joyfully of Him. And Peter—the very one who formerly denied the Lord—became the boldest preacher of them all. Three thousand people—including many of those who had formerly crucified the Lord—became followers of Him after Peter's preaching in the power of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 2:41). Truly, they did indeed 'receive power' after the Holy Spirit had come upon them—just as Jesus promised.
  2. Jesus not only told the apostles 'when' they would be His witnesses, but also 'where'. And as we read on in the story of the book of Acts, we find that the effectiveness of the Spirit's help is also shown in the way that the Lord's promise was kept—and that His followers did indeed become His witnesses first in the city of Jerusalem (Acts 2), then in the surrounding regions of Judea and Samaria (Acts 8), and finally to the end of the earth. (We, by the way—dwelling in Portland, Oregon—are a living proof of the greatness of the Spirit's ministry of enabling His people to bear witness of Jesus Christ; because it would be hard to find a spot on the globe more remote from Jerusalem—the very place where the Lord Jesus first made that promise—than where we sit this morning. And yet, here we are 2,000 years later—living in the location Jesus described as 'the end of the earth'—as Jesus' witnesses.)

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This, then, is a wonderful way to bring into practice all that we have learned about the Holy Spirit in the previous 30 lessons of our study. May we allow the Holy Spirit—our resident Friend and Helper—to use us to declare the good news of Jesus to this world. As Jesus promised the disciples;

*“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning” (John 15:26-27).*

Because the Holy Spirit helped them with bearing witness with Him of Jesus, we can be absolutely confident that the Spirit will also help us.

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<sup>1</sup>All Scripture readings are taken from *The Holy Bible, New King James Version*; copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

<sup>2</sup>This is adapted from *Bethany Bible Church PM Home Bible Study* notes, from January 8, 2014, on John 16:4b-15.

<sup>3</sup>R.A. Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973), pp. 86-87.