

Lifeworld.org

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you,” John 14:26.

The Holy Spirit

Lesson Aim: The study of Article 9.

9. The person and work of the Holy Spirit.

L499. Date: January 1960. **Text:** John 14:16-26. **Topic:** Holy Spirit.

INTRODUCTION — Today, we study one of the greatly neglected truths of the Scriptures—the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Many sincere Bible students overlook the importance of this study and the large place it has in sacred writings. The lesson today intends to set out that He is a person (not just a holy influence) and that He performs a definite work among men.

The Holy Spirit is essential for us to have redemption and communion with God. Even the Old Testament recognized this truth, showing that all real spiritual victory comes by Him: *“Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts,”* Zechariah 4:6. The success and well being of the Christian and church today is not dependent upon numbers nor organization, but upon the Spirit of God.

Today's lesson fits with the series of lessons which we have already studied this quarter. Lesson I showed God is a Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Thus, the Holy Spirit is divine. Lesson III showed how the virgin bore Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit, Luke 1:35. Today we simply go further in this study to investigate the person and ministry of that same Holy Spirit. If this study is profitable to create an understanding of Bible truth in the mind of the reader, it is because the Holy Spirit has made it so. The mind of carnal man is set against God, Romans 8:5-7. Man understands spiritual truth, not by human wisdom, but by spiritual insight which the Holy Spirit gives, I Corinthians 2:9-14. Let each reader pray for

the Spirit's help as he studies.

EXPOSITION

I. The Holy Spirit Is a Person, Verses 16-17.

1. He has the attributes of a person. If the Spirit were simply a “Divine influence” we would not call Him a “person.” He would have no personality. However, the Bible speaks of the Spirit as having the same attributes which men have, thus definitely showing His personality. He is said to have understanding of the things of God, I Corinthians 2:10-11. He has a will which chooses and selects in the conferring of spiritual gifts, I Corinthians 12:11. He has affection and can be grieved, Ephesians 4:30. He has moral appreciation so that He approves the right and condemns the wrong, John 16:8. These traits are those which distinguish between a person and an impersonal object. Since the Spirit has them, we can emphatically say He is a person. Observe that the idea that the Word of God (the Bible) is the Spirit is incorrect in view of these scriptures. The Spirit is as much a person as is Jesus Christ. Because He is unseen does not mean He is unreal.

2. He does the work of a person. Here the Scriptures abound in evidence of the personality of the Holy Spirit. Briefly, here is some evidence; let the student study this carefully: The Holy Spirit hears, John 16:13; He speaks, Acts 10:19 and John 16:13; He intercedes, Romans 8:26; He teaches, Luke 12:12 and John 14:26; He comforts, John 16:7; He guides, John 16:13; He reveals truth, John 16:14-15; He performs miracles, Acts 2:4 and 3:39; He calls to the ministry, Acts 13:2; He sets pastors over the churches, Acts 20:28. In view of these many passages, only blind ignorance could insist that the Holy Spirit does not have personality. He is neither a divine influence or a written word—He is very God of very God. He is a real and as much an individual person as you or I.

3. He is referred to with the personal masculine pronoun, “He.” Observe Jesus' teaching of the Holy Spirit recorded in John 16:13-14. In these two verses alone Jesus refers to the Spirit eight times as “He.” This means Jesus thought of the Spirit as a person. We do not call an impersonal object “He” but “it.” Objects as furniture, grass, wind, or even intangible things as influence or reputation, are referred to as “it” because these do not have personality. One never refers to another man as “it” because man is a person. Thus when the Bible speaks of the Holy Spirit as “He,” it means the Spirit is to be viewed as a person. Someone may wonder, “What is the

significance of the Holy Spirit being a person?" It makes Him more real to us. It helps us understand when one rejects the Spirit's leading he is rejecting God just as really as if Jesus stood in visible form and beckoned. It reveals the heresy of all those who deny the reality of the person of the divine Spirit of God.

(Note: Any translation of Scripture which refer to the Holy Spirit as "it" is incorrect at that point.)

II. The Holy spirit Is a Divine Person **— One of the Godhead**

This matter has already been touched in our study of the Trinity in Lesson I on January 3, 1960. Here more evidence of the deity of the Spirit will be given, showing the Spirit, as well as the Father and the Son, is God.

1. The name of God is given Him. In Acts 5:3 and 5, Peter refers to Ananias and Sapphira trying to lie about their offering. He observes they lied to the Holy Spirit and call Him "God." Thus he says the Spirit is God! In Romans 8:9-11 this Spirit is called "*the Spirit of God . . . the Spirit of Christ . . . the Spirit of him who raised up Jesus.*" He is thus intimately connected with the divine nature of God.

2. The perfections of God are ascribed to Him. In the sphere of wisdom, He knows the things—even the deep things—of God, I Corinthians 2:10-11. (Therefore, He is qualified to be the teacher of men.) In the sphere of ability, He is powerful beyond our understanding, Romans 15:19. (Thus does He qualify God's messengers for work, Micah 3:8.) In the sphere of communion, He is ever-present, Psalm 139:7-11. Observe that the traits of wisdom, eternal existence, ability, and omnipresence are attributed elsewhere to God the Father. These perfections are shared with the Spirit. Thus it is seen that the Holy Spirit is not just a person—He is a divine person. He shares equally with the Father and Son all the attributes of the Godhead.

3. The works of God are ascribed to Him. The unity of the Godhead is evidenced in the same work being done by different persons of the Godhead. Creation, for instance, is attributed to both the Son and the Spirit. See John 1:3 and Job 33:4. Elsewhere the Holy Spirit is said to control the working of Providence so that the needs of all creatures are supplied, Psalm 104:13. It is the Holy Spirit which effects the miracle of regeneration in the heart of the believer so that being "born again" is the same thing as being "born of the Spirit," John 3:5. Paul also expresses salvation under the term "the renewing of the Holy Spirit," Titus 3:5. No man would be saved without this ministry

of the Spirit; as will be seen below. Finally, while we usually think of Jesus in relation to resurrection, Romans 8:11 says it is the Holy Spirit who performs this ministry. This fact is also mentioned in 1 Peter 3:18. Jesus Himself says, *“It is the spirit that quickeneth”* (makes alive, resurrects), John 6:63. We have hope in our being kept safely unto eternity and being resurrected to be with our Lord because the Holy Spirit abides with and within us.

4. The worship of God is directed to Him. The same reverence ascribed to God the Father and Son are likewise ascribed to the Holy Spirit. The Great Commission authorizes baptism to be administered in the name (authority) of the Father, Son and Spirit, Matthew 28:19-20. Each plays an equally important part in conversion and Christian life. Therefore baptism should be administered under the authority of all Three. This Spirit is He who speaks to the churches, Revelation 2:7, 11, 17. Heed must be given His admonitions and guidance. How grievous is the sin of ignoring the ministry of the Holy Spirit to the believer and the church.

5. He may be sinned against. Matthew 12:22-32 gives the occasion of the “Unpardonable Sin” which is sin against the Holy Spirit. There is much discussion, misunderstanding and projection of theories concerning it. Look at the facts: The statement of Jesus was called forth by evil men attributing the works of God to Satan. The words of Jesus are: *“All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost (Spirit) shall not be forgiven unto men,”* verse 31. Verse 32 develops the idea further. Why is sin against the Holy Spirit so serious? Because he who rejects the Holy Spirit's work has no other means of approach to God. Even conviction of sin does not come separate from the Spirit. That reprobate state which causes one so to call good evil has put one beyond the power of return. Repentance is no longer possible and so the sin is “unpardonable.” Read Romans 1:18-32 noting the recurring, “God gave them up” in verses 24, 26, 28.

III. The Holy Spirit Is a Witness to God, Verses 18-26.

1. He continues the ministry of Jesus, verse 18. In verses 16-17 Jesus promises to send another “comforter” to abide with the disciples. This Comforter was to take His place which was being vacated by His ascension into heaven. (Note: “Comforter” in our King James Version actually means “Companion,” or “One Called Alongside to Help.” Some refer to the “Comforter” as a “Paraclete” which is just the transliterated form of the

Greek word.) Now Jesus refers to the coming of that Companion as: *"I will not leave you comfortless (companionless orphans): I will come to you."* The Holy Spirit was thus to both take the place of Jesus as the companion of the disciples and also to teach and guide them in ways of obedient service. This is His ministry today. Jesus is not now here (except as His presence is manifest through the Spirit) but the Spirit directs our lives and empowers our service as surely as if Jesus were visible. It is an error to pray for the presence of God's Spirit. He is here. Let us rather pray that we may be submissive to His leading that His presence may be manifest in worship and service.

2. He reveals God, verse 19. Jesus promises the disciples, "Ye see me." Yet, actually they saw Him physically no more than we see Him physically. They did see Him spiritually, just as we do. When we look into the Book inspired by the Spirit, we can see God. When we witness the lives of transformed men, we can see God. When we hear inspired sermons of Bible truth, we can see God. In all these, and other ministries, the Holy Spirit is revealing God's presence and power and magnificence. We stand amazed in the presence of such a wonderful revelation. Think of how little we would know of God if it were not for the Holy Spirit's work. We would have no Bible, nor be able to understand it if we did have it. We would have no personal religious experience. We would be in pagan darkness without Him. Praise God for His wonderful Spirit!

3. He shows our relationship to God, verse 20. The real insight and understanding of the relationship between the Father, the Son and the believer is not possible without the Holy Spirit. Jesus says this understanding would come only "at that day," that is the time when the Spirit would come. He came in power at Pentecost and comes upon each of us at the moment of conversion. There He takes up permanent abode within the believer. Then, *"the Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God,"* Romans 8:16. Thus we are not dependent upon our own feelings alone, but have the abiding witness of the Holy Spirit that we are redeemed children of God. Human emotions are not to be trusted; a certain emotional experience may or may not be true conversion. However, he who has the witness of the Spirit in his heart has an undeniable proof that salvation is his! Does the reader actually have this positive assurance?

4. He leads into obedience to God, verses 21-24. Love for the Lord Jesus Christ is demonstrated by a life of obedience. This alone is proof of love. *"He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him,"* I John 2:4. The man who lives in disobedience to God, persisting therein, is manifesting that he does not know

God. Leadership of the Holy Spirit always is shown by deeds of service to the good of man and the glory of God. How hypocritical for the normal man to speak of his love for the Lord and live in disobedience to God's will. No wonder such woe is pronounced upon the hypocrite by Jesus. This is the most detestable of all men! He who knows God, loves Jesus, and follows the Spirit's leading will manifest it by a life of obedience to his Heavenly Father, Galatians 5:22-23.

5. He enables us to understand the things of God, verses 25-26. This teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit is of supreme importance to the believer. How can one do the will of God unless he first knows what that will is? Thus the Spirit instructs that He may lead and qualify for service. The Spirit needs to be our instructor, for He inspired the Word of God, I Peter 1:21; II Timothy 3:16. God's revelation of deep truth comes through His Spirit. The Spirit alone searches and understands the things of God. Then He communicates part of this truth to us, I Corinthians 2:10-14. It is only as His teaching is done that we can understand. Things of God are only "spiritually discerned." One may gain knowledge of historical facts and may memorize much scripture, but it is still alien to him without this teaching ministry of the Spirit. He who reads the Bible should read with the prayerful expectation that the Spirit will reveal its truths. He who thus reads and studies and prays will find choice gems in the oldest and most familiar texts as well in the new. It is not human wisdom but spiritual instruction that makes one a true Bible scholar.

IV. The Holy Spirit Is Vitally Related to Our Salvation.

1. He convicts men concerning the truth, John 16:8-11. The convicting ministry of the Spirit is threefold: First, He convicts of the sinfulness of unbelief. Unbelief is a worse sin than any of the "bad" sins of the flesh because it is the only sin which condemns the soul, John 3:18. The sins of the flesh are but the outward expressions of a corrupt inner state. It is from the evil heart that there comes evil deeds, Luke 6:45. Salvation does not come because men quit their evil deeds, but because they quit their unbelief—that is, because they trust in Christ Jesus, John 3:14-18, 36; 5:24. Second, He convicts of the righteousness which is acceptable to God. Self-righteousness does not bring one closer to God, but puts him farther away. Isaiah 64:6 says our righteousnesses are as "filthy rags" which Paul says Israel's self-righteousness has kept them from submitting to God's righteousness, Romans 10:3. Only the righteousness of God which comes by Jesus Christ is sufficient when we stand before Him, Philippians 3:7-9.

Third, He convicts of the coming judgment of God against sin. This judgment is according to the standards of truth. It is as certain as death, Hebrews 9:27. Every person will stand before the judgment of God and give a personal account for himself alone, Romans 14:10, 12. How will you fare when your name is called? The Holy Spirit warns you to prepare.

2. He calls to forgiveness and service. Jesus truly said, *“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day,”* John 6:44. This “drawing” is done by the Holy Spirit. Paul refers to the Roman Christians as those who are “called to be saints,” Romans 1:7. According to Romans 8:28-30, the chain of redemption which stretches from eternity to eternity includes these links: foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, and glorification. Observe that the call of God is the center link. The person who is not so called does not feel conviction of sin and will not believe to the saving of the soul. It is only those who are called and respond who know assuredly that the Gospel is the power of God, I Corinthians 1:23-24. He who thinks he can be saved any time he gets ready has overlooked this important fact. No one can be saved without the call of God. That is why the scripture admonishes, *“Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts,”* Hebrews 4:7.

QUESTIONS

1. Explain: “The Holy Spirit is a person.”
2. Give some evidence that the Holy Spirit is a person.
3. Give some evidence that the Holy Spirit is a Divine person.
4. How does the deity of the Spirit relate to the doctrine of the Trinity?
5. List some of the works of God ascribed to the Holy Spirit.
6. Explain “the sin against the Holy Spirit.” Why is it unpardonable?
7. How does the Spirit continue the ministry of Jesus?