



“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.

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INTRODUCTION—Today, the study deals with a most glorious topic: “the person and work of the Holy Spirit.” Many sincere Bible students have overlooked this blessed Bible doctrine though it holds a large place in the sacred Scriptures. Today’s study is approached prayerfully that this subject may bring a revival in the heart of each one who reads. Here is the secret to Christian victory; **“Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit; saith the Lord of hosts,”** Zechariah 4:6.

Even a study concerning the Holy Spirit must depend upon Him as the teacher. The carnal mind of man is alien to the things of God, Romans 8:5-7. Spiritual truth is perceived, not by mere human wisdom, but by that spiritual insight which the Holy Spirit alone can inspire, I Corinthians 2:9-14. It is one phase of His ministry to guide believers into all truth, John 14:26. There is no other theme in the whole gamut of Biblical theology which is the basis of such vast blessing to the believer as the truths of the person and work of God's Spirit.

This lesson is closely related to the first lesson studied this quarter. Therein it was set out that God is a Trinity: Father, Son, and Spirit. It was related to the second lesson studied also. Therein it was observed that the defeat of Satan and the solution to the sin problem of mankind rested in Jesus Christ (whose physical birth was due to the Spirit’s work, Luke 1:34-35) and the salvation of those who believe. The approach to the lesson will not be a verse-by-verse commentary on the Lesson Text.

EXPOSITION

I. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A PERSON

Personality refers to one's existence as a complete character in himself. Our insistence that the Holy Spirit is a “person” is an insistence that He has a conscious existence and qualities which show Him to be a complete person in Himself. He is no mere “holy influence,” but as much a person as is the Father or the Son.

1. His attributes. The Spirit's personality is manifest in the personal attributes associated with Him. The Bible shows the Spirit has as many attributes as men, including: understanding (I Corinthians 2:10-11), will (I Corinthians 12:11), affection and emotion (Ephesians 4:30), moral appreciation (John 16:8), and like matters. Those traits distinguish between a person and an impersonal object. As the Spirit has them, we can say emphatically that He is a person. He is more than a “divine influence” from God. He is a person. The fact that He is unseen does not mean He is unreal.

2. His work. The work which the Holy Spirit performs shows He is an intelligent person. The Holy Spirit hears (John 16:13), speaks (Acts 10:19), intercedes (Romans 8:28), teaches (Luke 12:12; John 14:26), comforts (John 16:7), guides (John 16:13), reveals truth (John 16:14-15), calls to the ministry (Acts 13:2), sets pastors over churches (Acts 20:28), and other such acts. It seems that only ignorance or prejudice could keep one from admitting that One who can think, know, speak, reveal, command, strive, move, help, guide, create, sanctify, inspire, make intercession, raise the dead, and like matters, is a Divine Person. The Holy Spirit's work proves He is neither Divine influence nor written word, but “very God of very God”—the third **person** of the Godhead!

3. References to Him. The Holy Spirit is referred to by use of the third person masculine pronoun, “HE.” In John 16:13-14 Jesus refers to the Spirit as “he” no less than nine times. This shows Jesus thought of the Spirit as a person. Impersonal objects (as furniture, grass, wind, influence, power and reputation) are called “it,” not “he.” They do not have personality. A man is not called “it” because he is a person. Thus the repeated references in the Bible in which the Holy Spirit is called “he” is evidence that the Spirit is a person. Any translation of Scripture which refers to the Spirit as “it” is incorrect in this point.

But is it really important whether the Spirit is a person or an influence? Yes, indeed! (1) It makes Him more real to know He is a person, and

encourages our dependence upon Him. (2) It underscores the seriousness of rejection of the Spirit's leading. He who rejects the Spirit is rejecting God just as certainly as if he rejected a call of Jesus in visible form. (3) It makes Christians more dependent upon His ministry and so empowers their lives. (4) It reveals the heresy of those who deny the reality of the person or the Holy Spirit of God.

II. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A DIVINE PERSON

This truth is evident in a declaration of a belief in a Trinity composed of Father, Son and Spirit, The Spirit, as much as the Father and the Son, is God!

1. His name. The name of God is given Him. The spirit is called "God" in Acts 5:3, 5. Paul makes the same type of reference in Romans 8:9-11. He is not "the Spirit of God" in the same sense an angel is "an angel of God"—in the sense of ownership but He is personally of a divine nature.

2. His perfections. The perfections of God are ascribed to Him. He knows all things, even the deep things of God, I Corinthians 2:10-11. He is powerful beyond understanding, Romans 15:19. He is ever-present all over the universe, Psalm 139:7-11. Now these traits of wisdom, eternal existence, ability, and omnipresence are attributes elsewhere only to God. And yet, they are the perfections of the Holy Spirit. This shows the Holy Spirit and God are co-equal personages. Father, Son, and Spirit share all the attributes of the Godhead.

3. His works. The works that God alone can do are ascribed to the Holy Spirit. These include creation (Genesis 1:2), casting out demons (Matthew 12:28), conviction of sin (John 16:8), regeneration (John 3:8; Titus 3:5), and resurrection (Romans 8:11). This is proof that the Holy Spirit is a person who is divine in His nature. He is God, He is One with God. Who but God could do works like these?

4. His worship. The same reverence and worship ascribed to the Father and Son are likewise ascribed to the Holy Spirit. The Great Commission equates the divine name (authority) of Father, Son, and Spirit, Matthew 28:10-20. If the baptismal observance is an act of worship, here worship is ascribed to Holy Spirit. The apostolic benediction expressed in II Corinthians 13:14 includes the three persons of the Trinity. Since apostolic benedictions are prayers there prayer is addressed to the Spirit. The Spirit is due all the reverence and worship paid to the Father and, the Son. He is co-equal with them, a divine person, and worthy to receive worship.

5. His rejection. Matthew 12:22-32 identifies the "unpardonable sin"

with “sin against the Holy Spirit.” The sin which is “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven unto men,” verse 31. Why is such a sin so serious? Because the Spirit is God! Moreover, He is the person of the Godhead who makes effective the grace of God the Father and the sacrifice of God the Son so that a sinner can be saved. Blaspheming the Spirit would be no more serious than blaspheming a preacher of the Gospel if the Spirit was not divine. Yet because He is God, and so intimately related to man's redemption, it is eternally tragic to blaspheme Him.

III. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A WITNESS

1. His companionship. As Jesus was the Christians' companion before His ascension, the Holy Spirit became their companion afterwards, John 14:16-17. The King James Version of the Bible translates as “Comforter” a word which actually means “Companion,” “one called along side to help.” This new Companion, who is identified as the Holy Spirit, was to take the place vacated by Jesus' ascension. His coming and continued presence since that day is the fulfillment of Jesus' promise, “I will not leave you comfortless (companionless orphans).” The Holy Spirit constantly, unceasingly, dwells within every believer so that no Christian is ever alone!

2. His ministry. Verse 18 of the lesson text assures the disciples that Jesus would come to them in the ministry of the Spirit. That is, the Spirit would continue the work Jesus was doing. He was to be to the disciples of all generations what Jesus was to those disciples in Palestine: companion, teacher, and guide. This is the Spirit's ministry today. He superintends the lives of God's children in this twentieth century as surely as Jesus superintended the original disciples. His ministry is presently exercised. It is an error to pray for the presence of God's Spirit. He is already here. Pray rather for a spirit of submission that His leading may be manifest in worship and service.

3. His revelation of God. Verse 19 assures Christians that they will see Jesus day by day. This promise is not realized with the physical eye, but with the eye of faith by which we know of the Spirit's presence and ministry. By His ministry, we see God in the Word, in nature, in the workings of providence. In periods of personal devotion the Holy Spirit brings such inspiration to our hearts that it seems almost that heaven is open so that God can be seen! Think how blighted and limited our spiritual lives would be today if it were not for the Holy Spirit. With no Bible, with no understanding of spiritual things, with no Companion, with no help in prayer, how desperate would be our condition. Praise God for His wonderful Spirit!

4. His revelation to believers. The ministry of the Holy Spirit to believers includes their instruction, John 16:13-14. Only He can set out our relationship with the Father and the Son so we can understand and rejoice in it. He “bears witness along with our spirit, that we are the children of God,” Romans 8:16. He makes the things of God real. He illuminates our minds as we study and pray, making an understanding of the Word possible. He closes doors and opens doors in our lives to show the way God's will would lead. But most precious of all, He makes God real! The Christian's relationship to God is not based solely upon a conversion experience which may have happened long ago, but upon the daily witness of God through the Spirit.

5. His leadership. The Spirit always leads believers in the way of obedience, verses 21-24. He who knows God, loves Jesus, and follows leading of the Holy Spirit, will live a life of full obedience, Galatians 5:22-23. The Spirit never leads one contrary to the principles of the Word. He never leads one except in accord with the principles of truth. He who neglects God's church, ceases to pray for sinners, turns aside to false doctrines, or adopts practices unworthy of Christian conduct is proving that he follows not the Spirit. The Spirit's leadership is extended to every Christian. It can be rejected and the Spirit grieved. It can be followed and the believer blessed and God honored. How shall it be in your life?

6. His instruction. It is the Spirit who enables believers to understand the things of God, verses 25-26. His teaching ministry is extremely important. One cannot do God's will unless he knows God's will. The Spirit instructs that He might qualify and lead us into service. He is the only adequate teacher of the Word. He inspired its writing, I Peter 1:21; II Timothy 3:16. He alone understands the deep things of God, and He alone is able to communicate these deep truths to us, I Corinthians 2:10-14. He who reads the Bible should do so with the prayerful expectation that the Spirit will be his teacher. Such an approach to the Scriptures will bring forth choice gems in the oldest and most familiar texts as well as in the new. It is not the wisdom of men, but the instruction of the Spirit, which makes one a true Bible scholar.

IV. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS INTERJACENT [In Between]

As an interjacent, the Holy Spirit stands between man and God. Like the Lord Jesus, He is there to represent God before men and to represent men before God. In this position, He is vitally related to our salvation and service.

1. He convicts, John 16:8-11 describes the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit as a three-fold ministry. (1) He convicts of the sinfulness of unbelief. It is unbelief, not the so-called “bad” sins, which condemns the soul, John 3:18. Sins of the flesh are but the demonstration of the corrupt inner heart of unbelief, Luke 6:45. Salvation does not come because one quits his evil deeds, but because he quits his unbelief—he trusts Jesus as Saviour, John 3:14-18, 36; 5:24. (2) The Spirit convicts men concerning the kind of righteousness which God demands. Man can have only one of two kinds of righteousness: self-righteousness or divine righteousness. Self-righteousness separates one from God. It is as “filthy rags” before God and keeps men from submitting to God's offer of righteousness, Isaiah 64:13; Romans 10:3. When one stands before God, only the righteousness which comes by Jesus Christ will be sufficient and acceptable, Philippians 3:7-9. (3) The Holy Spirit convicts men of God's judgment against sin. This judgment is certain, Hebrews 9:27. It will be by righteous standards, Acts 17:31. Each person will stand before God to give a personal account of himself alone, Romans 14:10, 12. The Holy Spirit warns men of this and seeks to prepare them before the judgment. This is His “convicting” (convincing) work.

2. He calls. Romans 8:28-30 says the chain of redemption stretches from eternity to eternity and includes these links: foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, and glorification. Observe that the call of God is the center link. Jesus 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. A man is drawn by the Holy Spirit. Until one is called (“drawn”) by the Spirit, he will feel no conviction for 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. If any unsaved reader thinks he can be saved any time he gets ready to call upon God, he had better look at these solemn facts again! No one is saved without the call of God. This is why the scriptures admonish, **“Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts,”** Hebrews 4:7.

3. He regenerates. “Regeneration is that act of God by which the governing disposition of the soul is made holy, and by which, through the truth as a means, the first holy exercise of this disposition is secured.”—A. H. Strong. It is otherwise called “the new birth,” “being born again,” “being saved.” It is the most glorious of human experiences and is accomplished by the Holy Spirit. This is not to say that the Holy Spirit, as the immediate agent, does not use instrumentality in regeneration. We mean only that the power which regenerates is the power of God and this is made effective by

the Holy Spirit. A man who has been saved knows perfectly well that he did not work the change himself. God did it for him!

In salvation, a man hears the Word, I Peter 1:23. The Holy Spirit makes the truth of that word meaningful to him. Thus the hearer is convicted. In response to man's repentance, the Holy Spirit regenerates him by producing faith in his heart. The man exercises this faith and is made "a new creature" in Christ Jesus because the Spirit, in response to faith, produces a moral and spiritual image of Jesus in the penitent believer. So it is seen that in salvation, a man consciously and freely surrenders to Christ as Saviour and Lord. Yet, the conviction, calling, faith and offer of forgiveness are all God's work. Truly, salvation is of the Lord!

4, He sanctifies. Sanctification is consecration or dedication to God. God saves men with the intention that each one would "be conformed to the image of His Son,"—sanctified. In salvation, each Christian is sanctified in that thereby he becomes dedicated to God. He is further sanctified in that has an inner purification caused by transformation of character. The Holy Spirit continues to strive with a man, after salvation, to work out in his life the inner sanctification already received. So it is that the same Spirit which regenerates likewise works in the believer to produce full sanctification, II Thessalonians 2:13: I Peter 1:2.

5. He intercedes. It has been pointed out above that the Spirit stands as an interjacent between God and man. He takes the things of God and makes them understandable to man. In like manner, He takes man's praises and prayers and offers them up before God, Romans 8:26-27. Therefore, believers have not only the mediation of the Son but also the intercession of the Spirit. Praise God!

CONCLUSION—All that has been said concerning the Holy Spirit does not lessen the importance of Jesus nor His sacrifice. He is still the Saviour by whose sacrifice men are redeemed. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the divine Trinity. He makes applicable to man that redemption which has been provided by the grace of the Father and the sacrifice of the Son. As no man can come to God except through Jesus Christ, so no man can come through Jesus save by the Holy Spirit. The three are one. To each one, as well as to the three together, man owes his hope of eternity. Thank God He is a God of love and mercy. Thank God He is a Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Observe how this study relates to that designated for next week's lesson.

QUESTIONS

1. Why should we realize the Holy Spirit is a person?
2. How do His attributes and work prove He is a person?
3. Why is it significant that He is a divine person?
4. In what sense is He a “Comforter”?
5. How does He reveal God to believers?
6. What is His relationship to believers?
7. Of what does the Spirit convict the sinner?
8. How does the Spirit call one to Christ?
9. What is His relationship to salvation?
10. What is His relationship to Jesus?