

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S WORK WITH THE UNSAVED

John 16:7-11.

Most of the passages in the New Testament that refer to the Holy Spirit deal with His relation to the Christian. But there is one notable passage that refers to His dealings with the sinner, namely, John 16:7-11.

The Holy Spirit came into the world for business. He did not come just for a visit. At the early age of twelve years, Christ was about His Father's business, which was the work of redemption. But while Christ was engaged in the business of preparing salvation, the Holy Spirit is now engaged in the business of applying salvation. Christ prepared the cure for sin; the Holy Spirit administers it. Indeed, He is the ONLY ONE who can successfully administer it. That is His business. Some of us may have made the mistake of trying to take it out of His hands. Some feel so efficient that they are persuaded that they can do it better than He. As human beings, we are prone to neglect that which we are appointed to do, and to meddle with that which He alone can do. How does the Holy Spirit work with the unsaved?

I. He Bears Witness To The Truth Regarding Jesus Christ.

"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, Even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning." John 15:26-27. "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him." Acts 5:30-32.

All of the Holy Spirit's work centers in Christ. It is His mission to magnify, to glorify, and to make glad the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. He Illuminates the Understanding.

III. He Convicts.

"He will reprove the world of sin". The term, "convict", is a legal one and means literally to bring to a point, a decision, or a conclusion. It includes four ideas, namely, a thorough examination of all the facts, a positive proof that the indictment is true, a decisive judgment based upon those facts and the indictment, and a punitive power. In other words, to convict means to prove one guilty.

According to John 16:8, the Holy Spirit is to convict the unsaved of three things:

1. Of Sin Committed.

Men have never been in a hurry to confess their sins. The Holy Spirit so moves or operates on them that they are moved to confession of their wrongdoings. The Holy Spirit so vividly convinces of the nature of sin that those who have thought themselves to be the best of men have felt themselves to be the greatest of sinners. When one comes to see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, several things will take place:--

- (1) All efforts to establish a satisfactory standing in the sight of God upon the basis of a good life will be abandoned.

- (2) All thoughts of different degrees of sin will be given up. There are different degrees of crime but not different degrees of sin. All sin is rebellion against God.
- (3) The redemptive work of Christ will assume its rightful proportion. Where there is no conviction for sin, there will be no thirst for salvation. The convicting work of the Holy Spirit is almost identified with the gospel of Christ. The Holy Spirit works along the line of the gospel as electricity works along the electric wire.

One of the greatest needs today is for a conviction of sin. The unsaved need to be brought to a realization of their sinfulness, their lost condition, their great guilt before God, and their need of a Saviour. Real conviction for sin can only be produced by the Holy Spirit. Christians often fail to get the unsaved convicted of their sins because they try to do it themselves. We must remember that it is through us that the Holy Spirit produces conviction. We must believe that He can convict of sin. Then we must look to Him, and depend upon Him to do it, and be sure we are in such relationship with Him that He can convict others through us. He can do this work today as well as in any day.

Of what sin does the Holy Spirit convict men? It is the sin of unbelief. "Of sin because they believe not on Me." John 16:9. All previous conviction was of sin in general as expressed in disobedience to the broken law. But the Holy Spirit convicts of one special sin. That sin is not intemperance, avarice, or selfishness, but it is the sin of unbelief. Unbelief is a sin of which men have no conception, except by the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

Sin is any want of conformity to or transgression of the law of God. Unbelief is the greatest sin. It is the root of all other sins. Every other sin can be traced to this root sin. Destroy the cause of sins and you destroy the sins. Leave the root in the ground and you have to keep cutting the weeds. The sin of not believing on Christ is a terrible sin, yet, the average unbeliever does not look on unbelief in Christ as any sin at all. Many are proud of their unbelief. Others regard it as a mere misfortune as if to say, "I wish I could believe, but since I can't you ought to pity me." The Holy Spirit looks on unbelief as the worst, most decisive, most daring, and most damning of all sins. His first work is to convict men of this sin. How does He do this? How do we procure conviction in a court of justice? It is through the testimony of witnesses. When talking to His disciples Christ said, "Ye shall be My witnesses."

2. Of Righteousness Imputed.

It is not our righteousness for we have none, but it is Christ's righteousness. Christ is God's standard of righteousness. The sinner needs to see his own sin and consequent need, and the righteousness which God has provided for Him in Christ. The Holy Spirit convicts men of their need of that righteousness which Christ alone can give.

3. Of Judgment Accomplished.

"Of judgment, because the Prince of this world is judged." He was judged at the cross. God passed His judgment upon sin in the death of Christ on the cross. At the cross man is convicted of the sinfulness of sin. The Holy Spirit convinces the world that the ancient usurper had been dethroned by Christ. By His death on the cross Christ has delivered us from Satan's dominion. "He that heareth My Word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" John 5:24.

The Holy Spirit convicts the unsaved through believers in Christ. He ever depends upon human personality. The work of conviction is a partnership work. We cannot accomplish it without the Holy Spirit. He cannot do it without us. He must speak to the hearts of sinners and convict them of sin, righteousness, and judgment through the lives and words of those who have already found for themselves the meaning and the power of the new life through the message of the gospel. He has no way of getting at the unsaved except through the saved. We ought to be more careful to present an unobstructed channel for Him. He is trying to reach someone through your lips and your life if you will only let Him.

IV. He Regenerates.

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:3. "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John 3:5.

Regeneration is the impartation of new life to men who are spiritually dead because of their trespasses and sin. It is the Holy Spirit by whom God imparts to us His own life.

We are born with a corrupt nature, and come to have corrupt thoughts, affections, and will. Pleasing self is the very essence of sin. In regeneration we are given a new nature. We are given a new intellectual nature, a new affectional nature, and a new volitional nature. Thereafter we delight to please God.

V. He dictates Confession of Christ.