

Sabbath School Today
With the 1888 Message Dynamic

The Holy Spirit and Spirituality
Lesson 2. The Holy Spirit: Working Behind the Scenes

When a theologian writes that the Holy Spirit is “elusive” and “mysterious,” it leaves a layman in confusion. The Spirit is anything but a mythic force. The 1888 message clears away the shadowy misunderstanding of the Spirit. Since Christ is our true High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary, 100 percent Divine and 100 percent human, He is unable to physically be present everywhere. Hence, Christ’s representative, His equal as God, is “another Comforter” sent to come alongside everyone. He is the true Vicar of Christ.

Since the 1888 message is the clearest gospel revealed as present truth for our time, it is about the cleansing of the sanctuary truth in its post-1844 phase. So the Holy Spirit works with Christ revealing the truth of the gospel for our end-time.

The lesson for Tuesday entitled, “The Holy Spirit and the Sanctuary,” makes the connection with the Spirit’s work when the tabernacle was built in the wilderness. But the connection of the Holy with the sanctuary is more than cold dry facts. It is heartwarming truth. The focus of the 1888 message associates the work of the Holy Spirit in finishing the work of the sanctuary, preparing a people for translation without seeing death at Christ’s second coming.

In the past, the investigative judgment, a phrase used to describe the sanctuary truth, has been used to describe this last phase of Christ’s work. This investigation has been called the last warning message to the world. In some respects it has been more terrifying than comforting to conclude that Christ, the Father, and the angels are reviewing the record books of our lives in an effort to find dirty secrets that will keep us out of heaven.

The 1888 message brings comfort, teaching us that it is not our job to cleanse our lives of sin. In the Old Testament annual Day of Atonement it was the high priest who made atonement for the people. We may rightly conclude, then, that it is Christ’s job to cleanse us from sin. Our job is to let Him do it.

If you have never connected the work of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, with the idea of the investigative judgment, then this 1888 concept may bring joy to your heart. There are three things that the Spirit does which line up with the pre-Advent judgment truth. Jesus said of the Spirit, “I will send Him unto you. And when He is come, He will *reprove* the world of *sin*, and of *righteousness*, and of *judgment*.” Then Jesus explains what He means: “of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged” (John 16:7-11).

He will give the final gift of repentance. In every human heart the Holy Spirit has brought a conviction of sin, a sense of right and wrong. And blessed are those who respond to that conviction.

We would do well to make sure of our present heart attitude toward the ministry of the Holy Spirit, in the greater light of intelligence which now shines unmercifully upon the hidden motives and evil machinations of our ego, self. Many of us would be quite uneasy if a thoroughgoing psychoanalyst began work on us. Even though we have stood in numberless “reconsecration services,” how would we react to a genuine psychoanalysis by the true Holy Spirit of God, whose “great office work” is “thus distinctly specified by our Saviour: ‘And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin.’” [1] He convicts us of sin, so that He may heal us of it.

But He has a second work also: “He will convict the world ... of righteousness.” Why? “Because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more” (John 16:10). That means that we can “see” Jesus just as clearly now through the work of the Holy Spirit as the disciples could who saw Him face to face among them.

In the presence of God there is guilt. It is almost impossible to conceal even from yourself. Romans 8:7 says: “The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” We have within our minds now this resistance to being in His presence and there is a reservoir of sin and sinful inclinations within us that we do not understand.

Peter is an example of that. He said he would follow His Lord to prison and death. And he meant every word of it. But Ellen White says he did not know himself. Hidden within his heart were elements of evil that circumstances would fan to life. Unless he was made conscious of his danger these would prove his eternal ruin.

The message says there is a remedy for this reservoir of corruption. It is the probing of the Holy Spirit. His function is, among other things, to bring us into circumstances where we will be forced to confront traits we didn’t know we had, to bring up to our conscious level an awareness of sins still lurking in our lives.

Every time that happens, we are confronted with the decision of the ages. We have to decide, would I rather have Jesus or that? So over and over the Holy Spirit brings us into circumstances that tend to make us aware. And sometimes we say, I didn’t know I had that in me. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. Thank Him for doing it.

A. T. Jones put it this way at one of the ministerial meetings: “[Some of the brethren] came here free; but the Spirit of God brought up something they never saw before. The Spirit of God went deeper than it ever went before, and revealed things they never saw before; and then, instead of thanking the Lord that that was so, and letting the whole wicked business go, and thanking the Lord that they had ever so much more of him than they ever had before, they began to get discouraged. They said, ‘Oh, what am I going to do? My sins are so great.’ There they let Satan cast a cloud over them, and throw them into discouragement. ...

“If the Lord has brought up sins to us that we never thought of before, that only shows that He is going down to the depths, and He will reach the bottom at last; and when He finds the last thing that is unclean or impure, ... we say, ‘I would rather have the Lord than that’—then the work is complete, and the seal of the living God can be fixed upon that character.” [2]

Ellen White wrote: “It is because your circumstances have served to bring new defects in your character to your notice; but nothing is revealed but that which was in you.” [3]

Remember, repentance is not something that we work up ourselves; it is a gift from the Lord, for Acts 5:31 tells us that “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.” He convicts us of righteousness—that is, He convicts us of the “right” thing to do at all times. Accept the “gift.” Receive it! It’s not a sad experience; it is intensely joyous, for to be heart-reconciled to the Lord Jesus and the Father is joy unspeakable!

Joseph in Egypt immediately knew what Jesus would do—run. You “run,” not because of egocentric fear, but from a heart-appreciation of the price the Son of God paid for your soul: how can you not give Him your all, forever? He gave Himself, His all, forever!

Then third, He convicts “of judgment, because the prince of this world [Satan] is judged” (John 16:11), which means Satan is condemned in your life. He convicts us of “judgment,” that is, that Satan, the prince of this world, is cast out, defeated. He “convicts” us of triumph over sin; we see His power in our lives.

In other words, in plain language, it’s impossible for us to “backslide” unless we do what Stephen said the scribes and Pharisees did: “you always resist the Holy Spirit” (Acts 7:51, NKJV). The Holy Spirit says He will take you by the hand as a father leads a little child, or maybe the Hebrew means, take you in His “arms,” but He says we squirm away from Him (see Hosea 11:3, 4, TEV). There’s no need for backsliding.

Today, Jesus will “say” something to you, convict you of some duty. Tell your “Father which art in heaven” a deep thanks! Wait before Him.

—Paul E. Penno

Endnotes:

[1] Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 392.

[2] A. T. Jones, 1893 *General Conference Bulletin*, p. 404.

[3] Ellen G. White, “A Lively Hope,” *Review and Herald*, August 6, 1889.

Notes:

Pastor Paul Penno’s video of this lesson is on the Internet at:

<https://youtu.be/2SvEyiDbZJs>

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