

(Power From on High) 21. the Holy Spirit in the Epistle to the Hebrews

by A.B. Simpson

The Holy Spirit plays a vital role in the life of Christ and the Christian faith, guiding believers towards a deeper understanding of God's message and a more intimate relationship with Him.

Scripture: Hebrews 2:4, Hebrews 3:7-8, Hebrews 6:4-6, Hebrews 9:14, Hebrews 10:15, Hebrews 10:29

Topics: "The Role of the Holy Spirit", "The New Covenant"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the vital role of the Holy Spirit in the Epistle to the Hebrews, illustrating His connection to Christ's death, the New Covenant, and the supernatural workings of the Gospel. The Holy Spirit not only empowered Jesus during His crucifixion but also serves as the witness of the New Covenant, writing God's laws on our hearts. Simpson urges believers to heed the Spirit's call for immediate decisions in their faith journey, warning against the dangers of backsliding. He reassures that while the warnings in Hebrews are serious, God's mercy remains available for the penitent. Ultimately, the Holy Spirit guides us toward a life of victory and faithfulness, preparing us for eternal communion with God.

Transcript

There are five special references to the Holy Ghost in this epistle.

I. THE HOLY SPIRIT IN RELATION TO CHRIST'S DEATH.

Hebrews 9: 14. "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

We have seen that the Holy Ghost was connected with the whole life of the Lord Jesus Christ. Through His overshadowing He was born the incarnate Son of God. Through His baptism He was anointed for His special work. Through His leading He was brought into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, and then led forth in victory. He anointed Him to preach the gospel. He cast out demons through the Holy Ghost. All through His life the Spirit was in partnership with Him, and He condescended to be dependent upon Him for divine strength and grace even as we His disciples.

But now we see the Holy Ghost in the last hour of His life, ministering on the Cross of Calvary, and taking part in the last and most important act of the Master's whole life. "Through the Eternal Spirit He offered Himself without spot to God." The blessed Comforter was with Him in that dark, lone hour. He strengthened Him for His agony in Gethsemane, and upheld Him so that He could not die before His time nor sink under the power of the devil.

He sustained Him in sweetness, gentleness, and spotless righteousness, through the awful ordeal of shame and suffering, in the judgment hall and the Roman praetorium. He stood with Him in the anguish of the cross, when all others forsook Him, and when even His Father's face was turned away. To the very close of that great sacrifice, the Holy Ghost ministered, suffered and sustained, and then presented that offered life before the throne of God, as a perfect and spotless sacrifice for sin, and a sufficient ransom for every sinner's life.

Blessed Holy Ghost, how much we owe to Him, even for the Cross of Calvary, and the great Atonement! And just as He was with the Master in His crucifixion, so will He be with the disciple. He will enable us, likewise, to die to self and sin. It is only through the Holy Ghost that we can be truly crucified. "If we through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live." But if we try to kill ourselves, we shall only be like poor Nero, who stabbed his body a hundred times, but never dared to stab himself to death. Would we die with Jesus and rise into all the fullness of His endless life? Let us receive the Holy Ghost, and let Him love us into death and life eternal.

Then, if even these mortal lives should be laid down, before the coming of our Lord, the same blessed Paraclete that was with our dying Lord, will overshadow our last couch of pain, and, on His mighty wings of love, will bear our departing soul across the lonely voyage, to the bosom of the Father, and present our spirit without spot before the Throne of God. Blessed and eternal Spirit, our Mother God and Everlasting Friend, oh, how much we owe to Thee!

II. THE HOLY GHOST AS THE WITNESS OF THE NEW COVENANT.

Hebrews 10:15. "Whereof also the Holy Ghost is a witness; for after that He had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after these days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and write them on their minds, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people, for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

This is the Gospel revealed by the Holy Ghost to Jeremiah, in the dark and declining days of ancient Judaism, when, through the broken windows of the earthly temple, the prophet's vision looked to the light of a better morning.

This ancient covenant, so gloriously revealed to Jeremiah, is three times repeated in the Epistle to the Hebrews; and it must, therefore, be entitled to the greatest significance and weight. It is, indeed, the very essence of the Gospel. It breathes the spirit of the New Dispensation.

Under the old economy the law was written upon tables of stone. Here it is written upon our minds and upon our hearts. Thus it is made a part of our very nature, thought, desire, choice, and being. It is the instinctive and spontaneous impulse of our very life, and it is as natural for us to love it and to do it, as to live and to breathe.

We all know the force of the great law of love. How much do you suppose it would cost for that father and husband to hire the woman who nurses his children, and takes care of his home? What amount of money could purchase her toil and labor, as she lives by his side, shares his fortunes, and works herself to death for these helpless little ones? No earthly consideration could induce her to undertake this charge, no law except the law of force could make her such a slave. Yet there is another law, the law of love, and God has written it upon every mother's heart; and by the drawing of that sweet law of love, she leaves her father's house, her luxurious home, her comfortable surroundings, and goes forth with the man she loves, to share his fate, to toil by his side, to nurture his children, to work early and late for these helpless little ones, unwearied, unconscious of any sacrifice and only too glad to be able to pour out her very life to make them happy. Ah! this is the law upon the heart! This is the way the Spirit of God puts into us the will of God and makes it our choice and our delight.

Therefore, the Holy Ghost was given at Pentecost on the exact anniversary of the giving of the law. Pentecost and Sinai are the two ordinances in the calendar of the ages that correspond with each other. The first was the law written upon stone; the second was the law in the living power of the Holy Ghost in human hearts and lives.

Beloved, have we learned this secret of life and power? Do we know the divine covenant, the indwelling Spirit, and "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," making us "free from the law of sin and death," and "fulfilling the righteousness of the law " not only by us, but "in us"?

Then it is added, "I will be your God, and ye shall be my people." We do not become His people first, thus constituting Him our God; but He first becomes our God, and we are His people. The mother is before the babe, and it is her motherhood that constitutes its childhood. It is because she is its mother, that it is her child. And so God calls us, chooses us, saves us, fills us, and we respond to His love and become His willing, obedient children.

Then our sins are not only forgiven, but forgotten. We are lifted above every cloud of condemnation, and it is true for ever, "their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

Beloved, have we entered into this New Covenant by the Holy Ghost, and are we walking under the spontaneous and all-impelling impulses of the indwelling Holy Ghost?

III. THE HOLY GHOST IN RELATION TO THE SUPERNATURAL SIGNS AND OPERATIONS OF THE GOSPEL.

"God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will." Heb. 2: 4.

The apostle gives us in this passage a vivid picture of the preeminence of the "great salvation" of the Gospel as compared with the law. The dispensation of Moses was introduced by angels and by men, but the Gospel has been "spoken to us by the Lord," and repeated by those who were sent directly by Him, and then confirmed to us by the Holy Ghost Himself.

The passage refers not only to the signs and wonders of the early chapters of Christianity, but to the supernatural power which God has promised to every age and stage of the dispensation, to confirm to an unbelieving world the divine reality of God's great message. The Holy Ghost is still present in the Church, and is still giving the confirmatory signs, not only by His miracles of grace in the hearts of men, but by His

miracles of Providence in the Church and in the world and His miracles of power in the bodies of those who trust Him.

Beloved, do we know these signs, and are we proving them to the world? Is this gospel still a living power, and its own great witness? Who is there among us that has not seen enough to make us know and feel that it is the power of God? "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

IV. THE HOLY GHOST IN RELATION TO OUR IMMEDIATE DECISION FOR GOD.

"Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Heb. 3:7, 8.

This is always the Holy Spirit's message to men. It is always a present message, an urgent message, and demands an immediate decision. Back of it, He is always pointing to that solemn story of the wilderness, when God's chosen people came forth from bondage under His mighty hand, and advanced under His glorious leadership to the very gates of Canaan. Then, in one fatal moment, they faltered, doubted, disobeyed and went back to nearly half a century of failure, disappointment, and a dishonored death. Just for a single day they stood upon that narrow isthmus, and then they took the wrong step, and lost all by indecision. Oh, how sad, how desolate these wilderness years, ever moving but going nowhere; toiling, suffering, but accomplishing nothing, simply marking time, waiting for the sad inevitable hour that should close their disobedient lives!

Beloved, there are still such lives, there are men and women who have missed their opportunity. They have disobeyed their high calling, and have gone back from the gates of promise. They are simply marking time and finishing a life whose one sad echo will be forever, "Alas, what might have been!"

This is true of the sinner. There is a moment when he must decide or perish. The Holy Spirit's message to him is always, "Today, while it is called today," for it may not be all the day; it may be a golden moment on which eternity hangs, "Today, while it is called today, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts."

It is also His message to the disciple, for each of us comes up to the gates of the Land of Promise, to the point of a great decision, to the place for entire consecration, to the Jordan's bank where the Holy Ghost is waiting to descend upon us if we will dare to step down into the waters of death and self-dedication. And there comes a moment when there is no time to lose. It is NOW OR NEVER. Oh, if it is such a moment with any of us today, beloved, "while it is called today, harden not your hearts"!

Yes, and even after we have received the Holy Ghost there are crisis hours in consecrated lives. There are great doors of service offered; there are great openings for higher advances; there are sacrifices to be dared, advances to be made, promises to be claimed, victories to be won, achievements to be undertaken; but they will not wait for us. Like harvest time, they are passing by, and the Holy Spirit's message to us is, "Redeeming the time because the days are evil."

It is not merely the time, it is the point of time, *ton kairon*, the very niche of time. We have not days for it, but only moments. The days are evil, the moment is golden; let us seize it while we may. God help us, beloved, to understand that message, and to let that blessed Guide and Friend lead us from victory to victory, and at last present us faultless in the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

V. THE HOLY GHOST IN RELATION TO THE BACKSLIDER.

There are two very solemn passages in this epistle in relation to the backslider.

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them to repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame," Chapter 6:4-6.

"Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" Chapter 10: 29.

Time and space will not permit us to enter fully on the exposition of these verses, but a few remarks may throw sufficient light upon them to prevent their being a stumbling-block to sincere and trembling hearts.

In the first place, it is quite certain from other Scriptures, that there is mercy and forgiveness for every sinner who is willing to accept the mercy of God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Again and again, the infinite mercy of God to the penitent sinner has been repeated and reasserted, until no sincere penitent need ever doubt his welcome at the throne of grace. "All manner of sin and of blasphemy," our Savior has said, "shall be forgiven unto men."

In the next place, the sin of the persons referred to here is no ordinary sin. It is not a mere fall, but it is "falling away," and falling away so utterly that the backslider wholly rejects the very blood of Christ through which he might be forgiven, and throws away the only sacrifice and hope of mercy. He crucifies to himself the Son of God afresh; he puts Him to an open shame; he tramples upon His blood, and he defies and does despite unto the Spirit of grace.

The difficulty of his salvation arises not from any limitation of God's mercy, but from the fact that he utterly rejects God's mercy, and the only way by which it could be manifested through the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the third place, the case supposed is not necessarily an actual case. It may be of the nature of a warning and a supposition, and the very warning is given in order to prevent it from becoming a fact. The mother cries to her child, "Come back from the edge of the precipice or you will be killed," but this does not imply that the child is to be killed. It is the very means by which it is saved from death. God's warnings are not prophecies, but they are His loving way of keeping back that which otherwise would happen. And so the apostle adds, "we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak."

Finally, in the Revised Version there is a little word of comfort and hope in the sixth verse. Instead of "seeing they crucify to themselves" the translation is, "so long as they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh." It implies that in a certain spiritual condition they cannot be saved nor forgiven, but it also implies that so soon as they abandon that condition, and become penitent and accept the blood of Christ, the mercy of God is still free and full.

There is, therefore, no reason to infer from these very solemn warnings that any penitent soul need despair of being forgiven. At the same time, the warning is so solemn that we would not for one moment weaken its tremendous force. For we never can tell, when we begin to go back or even look back, where we are going to stop. That which seems but a trifling fall may become a "falling away," and may end in the rejection of Christ and the defiance of God. Our safety lies in heeding the solemn warning, "The just shall live by faith, but if any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe unto the saving of the soul."

The story is told of a man who advertised for a coachman. Among those who came were two who seemed to him to be particularly bright. He took them aside and asked them how near they could drive to the edge of a precipice without falling over. The first candidate answered that he could go within half an inch and had frequently done so, just shaving the edge and feeling perfectly safe. He then asked the other the same question. "Well, sir," replied the man modestly, "I really cannot tell, because I have never allowed myself to venture near the edge of a precipice. I have always made it a rule to keep as far as possible from danger, and I have had my reward in knowing that my master and his family were kept from danger and harm."

The master had no difficulty in deciding between the two candidates. "You are the man for me," he said, "the other may be very brilliant, but you are safe."

Ah, friends, let us not play with danger, trifle with sin, nor venture so close to the edge of the lake of fire that we may not be able to return! The Holy Ghost, as our loving, jealous Mother, is guarding us from harm by these very warnings. Like the Pilgrims in the Palace Beautiful, who went on their way saying, as they had looked at the wonderful visions of the palace, "These things make us both hope and fear," so, in a wise and holy fear as well as a bright and blessed hope, lies the balance of safety and the place of wisdom. Thus walking in His love and fear, may we be kept by the Holy Ghost until that glad hour when we, through the eternal Spirit, too, shall offer ourselves, without spot, to God.

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