

THE HOLY SPIRIT Chapter 1 The Holy Spirit

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Transcript

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Chapter 1

The Holy Spirit

In the past having given consideration to the attributes of God our Father, and then to a contemplation of some of the glories of God our Redeemer, it now seems fitting that these should be followed by this series on the Holy Spirit. The need for this is real and pressing, for ignorance of the Third Person of the Godhead is most dishonoring to Him, and highly injurious to ourselves. The late George Smeaton of Scotland began his excellent work upon the Holy Spirit by saying, "Wherever Christianity has been a living power, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit has uniformly been regarded, equally with the Atonement and Justification by faith, as the article of a standing or falling church. The distinctive feature of Christianity as it addresses itself to man's experience, is the work of the Spirit, which not only elevates it far above all philosophical speculation, but also above every other form of religion." The Importance of Studying the Holy Spirit Not at all too strong was the language of Samuel Chadwick when he said, "The gift of the Spirit is the crowning mercy of God in Christ Jesus. It was for this all the rest was. The Incarnation and Crucifixion, the Resurrection and Ascension were all preparatory to Pentecost. Without the gift of the Holy Spirit all the rest would be useless. The great thing in Christianity is the gift of the Spirit. The essential, vital, central element in the life of the soul and the work of the Church is the Person of the Spirit" (Joyful News, 1911). The great importance of a reverent and prayerful study of this subject should be apparent to every real child of God. The repeated references made to the Spirit by Christ in His final discourse (John 14 to 16) at once intimates this. The particular work which has been committed to Him furnishes clear proof of it. There is no spiritual good communicated to anyone but by the Spirit; whatever God in His grace works in us, it is by the Spirit. The only sin for which there is no forgiveness is one committed against the Spirit. How necessary is it then that we should be well instructed in the Scripture doctrine concerning Him! The great abuse there has been in all ages under the pretense of His holy name, should prompt us to diligent study. Finally, the awful ignorance which now so widely prevails upon the Spirit's office and operations, urges us to put forth our best efforts. Yet important as is our subject, and prominent as is the place given to it in Holy Writ, it seems that it has always met with a considerable amount of neglect and perversion. Thomas Goodwin commenced his massive work on The Work of the Holy Spirit in Our Salvation (1660) by affirming, "There is a general omission in the saints of God, in their not giving the Holy Spirit that glory that is due to His Person and for His great work of salvation in us, insomuch that we have in our hearts almost

forgotten this Third Person." If that could be said in the midst of the balmy days of the Puritans, what language would be required to set forth the awful spiritual ignorance and impotency of this benighted 20th century! In the Preface to his Lectures on "The Person, Godhead, and Ministry of the Holy Spirit" (1817), Robert Hawker wrote, "I am the more prompted to this service, from contemplating the present awful day of the world. Surely the 'last days' and the 'perilous times,' so expressly spoken of by the Spirit, are come (1 Tim. 4:1). The flood gates of heresy are broken up, and are pouring forth their deadly poison in various streams through the land. In a more daring and open manner the denial of the Person, Godhead, and Ministry of the Holy Spirit is come forward and indicates the tempest to follow. In such a season it is needful to contend, and that, 'earnestly, for the faith once delivered unto the saints.' Now in a more awakened manner ought the people of God to remember the words of Jesus, and 'to hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.'" So again, in 1880, George Smeaton wrote, "We may safely affirm that the doctrine of the Spirit is almost entirely ignored." And let us add, Wherever little honor is done to the Spirit, there is grave cause to suspect the genuineness of any profession of Christianity. Against this, it may be replied, Such charges as the above no longer hold good. Would to God they did not, but they do. While it be true that during the past two generations much has been written and spoken on the person of the Spirit, yet, for the most part, it has been of a sadly inadequate and erroneous character. Much dross has been mingled with the gold. A fearful amount of unscriptural nonsense and fanaticism has marred the testimony. Furthermore, it cannot be denied that it is no longer generally recognized that supernatural agency is imperatively required in order for the redemptive work of Christ to be applied to sinners. Rather do actions show it is now widely held that if unregenerate souls are instructed in the letter of Scripture their own willpower is sufficient to enable them to "decide for Christ." The Problem: Effort in the Flesh In the great majority of cases, professing Christians are too puffed up by a sense of what they suppose they are doing for God, to earnestly study what God has promised to do for and in His people. They are so occupied with their fleshly efforts to "win souls for Christ" that they feel not their own deep need of the Spirit's anointing. The leaders of "Christian" (?) enterprise are so concerned in multiplying "Christian workers" that quantity, not quality, is the main consideration. How few today recognize that if the number of "missionaries" on the foreign field were increased twenty-fold the next year, that that, of itself, would not ensure the genuine salvation of one additional heathen? Even though every new missionary were "sound in the faith" and preached only "the Truth," that would not add one iota of spiritual power to the missionary forces, without the Holy Spirit's unction and blessing! The same principle holds good everywhere. If the orthodox seminaries and the much-advertised Bible institutes turned out 100 times more men than they are now doing, the churches would not be one bit better off than they are, unless God vouchsafed a fresh outpouring of His Spirit. In like manner, no Sunday School is strengthened by the mere multiplication of its teachers. O my readers, face the solemn fact that the greatest lack of all in Christendom today is the absence of the Holy Spirit's power and blessing. Review the activities of the past 30 years. Millions of dollars have been freely devoted to the support of professed Christian enterprises. Bible institutes and schools have turned out "trained workers" by the thousands. Bible conferences have sprung up on every side like mushrooms. Countless booklets and tracts have been printed and circulated. Time and labors have been given by an almost incalculable number of "personal workers." And with what results? Has the standard of personal piety advanced? Are the churches less worldly? Are their members more Christ-like in their daily walk? Is there more godliness in the home? Are the children more obedient and respectful? Is the Sabbath Day being increasingly sanctified and kept holy? Has the standard of honesty in business been raised? The Need Those blest with any spiritual discernment can return but one answer to the above questions. In spite of all the huge sums of money that have been spent, in spite of all the labors which has been put forth, in spite of all the new workers that have been added to the old ones, the spirituality of

Christendom is at a far lower ebb today than it was 30 years ago. Numbers of professing Christians have increased, fleshly activities have multiplied, but spiritual power has waned. Why? Because there is a grieved and quenched Spirit in our midst. While His blessing is withheld there can be no improvement. What is needed today is for the saints to get down on their faces before God, cry unto Him in the name of Christ to so work again, that what has grieved His Spirit may be put away, and the channel of blessing once more be opened. Until the Holy Spirit is again given His rightful place in our hearts, thoughts, and activities, there can be no improvement. Until it be recognized that we are entirely dependent upon His operations for all spiritual blessing, the root of the trouble cannot be reached. Until it be recognized that it is "Not by might, (of trained workers), nor by power (of intellectual argument or persuasive appeal), but by MY SPIRIT,' saith the Lord" (Zech. 4:6), there will be no deliverance from that fleshly zeal which is not according to knowledge, and which is now paralyzing Christendom. Until the Holy Spirit is honored, sought, and counted upon, the present spiritual drought must continue. May it please our gracious God to give the writer messages and prepare the hearts of our readers to receive that which will be to His glory, the furtherance of His cause upon earth, and the good of His dear people. Brethren, pray for us.

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