

THE HOLY SPIRIT Chapter 5 The Covenant-Offices of the Holy Spirit

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Transcript

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Chapter 5

The Covenant-Offices of the Holy Spirit

The ground which we are now to tread, will, we fear, be new and strange to most of our readers. In the January and February 1930 issues of *Studies in the Scriptures*, we wrote two rather lengthy articles upon "The Everlasting Covenant." There we dwelt principally upon it in connection with the Father and the Son; here we shall contemplate the relation of the Holy Spirit unto the same. His covenant-offices are intimately connected with and indeed flow from His Deity and Personality, for if He had not been a Divine Person in the Godhead, He would not and could not have taken a part in the Covenant of Grace. Before proceeding further, let us define our terms. Definitions By the "Covenant of Grace," we refer to that holy and solemn compact entered into between the august Persons of the Trinity on behalf of the elect, before the foundation of the world. By the word "offices" we understand the whole of that part of this sacred compact which the Holy Spirit undertook to perform. Lest some should suppose that the application of such a term to the Third Person of the Godhead be derogatory to His ineffable majesty, let us point out that it by no means implies subordination or inferiority. It signifies literally a particular charge, trust, duty, or employment, conferred for some public or beneficial end. Hence we read of "the priest's office" (Ex. 28:1; Luke 1:8), the apostolic "office" (Rom. 11:13), etc. There is then no impropriety in using the word "office" to express the several parts which the Son and the blessed Spirit undertook in the Covenant of Grace. As Persons in the Trinity they were equal; as covenanting Parties they were equal; and as They in infinite condescension, undertook to communicate to the church unutterable favors and blessings, Their kind offices, so graciously and voluntarily entered into, neither destroy nor diminish that original equality in which They from all eternity subsisted in the perfection and glory of the Divine Essence. As Christ's assumption of the "office" of "Servant" in no way tarnished or canceled His equality as the Son, so the Spirit's free undertaking the office of applying the benefits of the Everlasting Covenant (Covenant of Grace) to its beneficiaries in no way detracts from His essential and personal honor and glory. The word "office," then, as applied to the covenant-work of the Holy Spirit, denotes that which He graciously undertook to perform by way of stipulated engagement and sets forth, under one comprehensive term, the whole of His blessed pledging and performances on behalf of the election of grace. To an enlightened understanding and a believing heart, there is in the Covenant itself—in the fact of it, and the provisions of

it—something singularly marvelous and precious. That there should have been a Covenant at all—that the three Persons in the Godhead should have deigned to enter into a solemn compact on behalf of a section of the fallen, ruined, and guilty race of mankind should fill our minds with holy wonderment and adoration. How firm a foundation was thus laid for the salvation of the church. No room was allowed for contingencies, no place left for uncertainties; her being and well-being was forever secured by unalterable compact and eternal decree. The Spirit's Covenant-Office: Sanctification Now the "office-work" of the Holy Spirit in connection with this "everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure" (2 Sam. 23:5), may be summed up in a single word, sanctification. The Third Person of the Holy Trinity agreed to sanctify, the objects of the Father's eternal choice, and of the Son's redemptive satisfaction. The Spirit's work of sanctification was just as needful, yea, as indispensable for the church's salvation, as was the obedience and blood-shedding of Christ. Adam's fall plunged the church into immeasurable depths of woe and wretchedness. The image of God in which her members had been created was defaced. Sin, like a loathsome leprosy, infected them to the very heart's core. Spiritual death spread itself with fatal effect over her every faculty. But the gracious Holy Spirit pledged Himself to sanctify such wretches, and frame and fit them to be partakers of holiness, and live forever in God's spotless presence. Without the Spirit's sanctification the redemption of Christ would avail no man. True, a perfect atonement was made by Him and a perfect righteousness brought in, and so the persons of the elect are legally reconciled to God. But Jehovah is holy as well as just, and the employments and enjoyment of His dwelling-place are holy too. Holy angels there minister whose unceasing cry is, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts" (Isa. 6:3). How then could unholy, unregenerated, unsanctified sinners dwell in that ineffable place into which "there shall in no way enter anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie" (Rev. 21:27)? But O the wonder of covenant grace and covenant love! The vilest of sinners, the worst of wretches, the basest of mortals, can and will enter through the gates into the Holy City: "And such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11). From what has been said in the last paragraph it should be clear that sanctification is as indispensable as justification. Now there are many phases presented in Scripture of this important Truth of sanctification, into which we cannot here enter. Suffice it to say that aspect of it which is now before us is the blessed work of the Spirit upon the soul, whereby He internally makes the saints meet for their inheritance in the light (Col. 1:12): without this miracle of grace none can enter Heaven. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (1 John 3:6): no matter how it be educated and refined, no matter how disguised by religious ornamentation, it remains still flesh. It is like everything else which earth produces: no manipulation of art can change the original nature of the raw material. No process of manufacture can transmute cotton into wool, or flax into silk: draw, twist, spin or weave, bleach and surface all we may, its nature remains the same. So men-made preachers and the whole corps of creature religionists may toil night and day to change flesh into spirit, they may work from the cradle to the grave to fit people for Heaven, but after all their labors to wash the Ethiopian white and to rub the spots out of the leopard, flesh is flesh still and cannot by any possibility enter the kingdom of God. Nothing but the supernatural operations of the Holy Spirit will avail. Not only is man polluted to the very core by sin original and actual, but there is in him an absolute incapability to understand, embrace or enjoy spiritual things (1 Cor. 2:14). The imperative necessity, then, of the Spirit's work of sanctification lies not only in the sinfulness of man, but in the state of spiritual death whereby he is as unable to live, breathe, and act Godward as the corpse in the graveyard is unable to leave the silent tomb and move among the busy haunts of men. We indeed know little of the Word of God and little of our own hearts if we need proof of a fact which meets us at every turn; the vileness of our nature and the thorough deathliness of our carnal heart are so daily and hourly forced upon us that they are a such a matter of painful consciousness to the

Christian, as if we should see the sickening sight of a slaughterhouse, or smell the death taint of a corpse. Suppose a man is born blind: he has a natural incapacity of sight. No arguments, biddings, threats, or promises can make him see. But let the miracle be wrought: let the Lord touch the eyes with His Divine hand; he sees at once. Though he cannot explain how or why, he can say to all objectors, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see" (John 9:25). And thus it is in the Spirit's work of sanctification, begun at regeneration, when a new life is given, a new capacity imparted, a new desire awakened. It is carried forward in his daily renewing (2 Cor. 4:16) and is completed at glorification. What we would specially emphasize is that whether the Spirit is convicting us, working repentance in us, breathing upon us the spirit of prayer, or taking of the things of Christ and showing them unto our joyful hearts, He is discharging His covenant-offices. May we render unto Him the praise and worship which is His due. For most of the above we are indebted to some articles by the late J. C. Philpot.

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