

The Holy Spirit in the World

by Chuck Smith

The Holy Spirit convicts people of sin, reproves the world of righteousness, and bears witness to the world that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Scripture: Genesis 1:2, John 14:17, John 16:7

Topics: "Conviction of Sin", "The Work of the Holy Spirit"

Description

Chuck Smith emphasizes the vital role of the Holy Spirit in the world, asserting that the church's revival hinges on understanding and embracing the Spirit's work. He explains that the Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, urging believers to recognize the importance of faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. Smith warns against hardening one's heart to the Spirit's reproof, as this leads to spiritual decline and ultimately judgment. He encourages the congregation to seek the Holy Spirit's guidance and empowerment to live righteously and to share the message of salvation with others. The sermon concludes with a call to embrace the freedom and victory over sin that comes through the Holy Spirit.

Transcript

Regarding the subject of the Holy Spirit, C. H. Spurgeon said,

I believe, brethren, that whenever the church of God declines, one of the most effectual ways of reviving her is to preach much truth concerning the Holy Spirit. After all, He is the very breath of the church. Where the Spirit of God is, there is power. If the Spirit be withdrawn, then the vitality of the godliness begins to decline and we are backsliding. Let us turn to the Spirit of God crying, 'Quicken Thou me in Thy way.' If we sorrowfully perceive that any church is growing lukewarm, be it our prayer that the Holy Spirit may work graciously for its revival. Let us return to the Lord. Let us seek again to be baptized into the Holy Spirit and into fire and we shall yet again behold the wonderful works of the Lord. He sets before it an open door and if we enter not, we ourselves are to be blamed. (C. H. Spurgeon)

Note that last part: "Let us return to the Lord. Let us seek again to be baptized into the Holy Spirit and into fire and we shall yet again behold the wonderful works of the Lord. He sets before us an open door. If we enter not, we ourselves are to blame." Tonight we would like to look at the subject of the work of the Holy Spirit in the world.

Jesus, in promising the Holy Spirit, the Blessed Paraklete, to the disciples said,

Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: But ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and he shall be in you. (John 14:17)

The Holy Spirit has been dwelling here on the earth from the beginning of creation. In verse 2 of Genesis, The earth was without form and void and the Spirit of God moved over the face of the waters. (Genesis 1:2)

Now in John 16:7, when Jesus was speaking of the coming of the Holy Spirit, He declared,

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient [or necessary] for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world [The work of the Holy Spirit in the world] of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: 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)

In Genesis chapter 6, when God saw the wickedness of the earth was exceedingly great and He declared His intention of destroying man from off of the face of the earth because the imagination of his heart was only evil continually, God declared, "My Spirit will not always strive with man." God's Spirit had been striving with those people in Noah's day. The Spirit had been convicting them of their sin. The Spirit was working in the world, reprovng the world of their sin, but they were rejecting the Holy Spirit. Though He was striving with them, in their hearts they knew what they were doing was wrong. They closed their minds and their hearts to the Holy Spirit and thus, God warned, "It is not going to always be. My Spirit will not always strive with man." There comes that day when the Spirit ceases to strive and the judgment of God comes, just as it did in the times of Noah.

Today we often call the striving of the Holy Spirit with man, the voice of conscience. Paul, in Romans 2, speaks of the law of God that is written in the hearts of man--the unregenerate man. Even in man's heart, God has written His law. Paul said, "The conscience also bearing them witness, as their thoughts either accuse or excuse them." So, God's law is written on the hearts of man and their conscience is reprovng them. Paul is talking about unregenerate men. In First Timothy 4:2, Paul speaks of those whose conscience had been seared as with a hot iron, who had rejected the voice of the Holy Spirit until they were able to do things without feeling guilt or without feeling any kind of remorse.

I was at a seminar at which some of the social scientists who follow the trends of society were sharing with us on how the church should prepare for the year 2000. And a man who has done a lot of research and written a book on the subject was saying that, for the most part, we adults are out of touch with what is happening in our world. We are out of touch with what is going on with the young people. He said we are living in a day and fast moving towards that time when the young people will have no consciousness of evil. They will not even know what evil is, and thus, they will be able to commit the most horrible crimes and not feel any sense of remorse. And since that conference, many times I have observed the remarks of the commentators after some of these serial killers are caught. When they are sitting there being tried, or even when sentence is passed, so often the remark is, "And they showed absolutely no remorse." They have consciences that are seared as with a hot iron.

The Spirit of God does convict of sin. He reprovng the world of sin. But people can and do resist this work of the Holy Spirit. When Stephen was standing before the Jewish council, he finally accused them of resisting the Holy Spirit, even as their fathers did.

When Jesus apprehended Paul on the road to Damascus, Jesus said to Paul, "It is hard for you to kick against the goads." This is interesting because Paul testified that as far as the righteousness of the law was concerned, he was blameless; that he had always sought to live with a clean conscience before God. And yet there was something inside that was goading him, so that when the Lord apprehended him, He said, "It has been hard for you to kick against the goads." (Acts 9:5 NKJV)

In Zechariah 7:12,

Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts has said in his Spirit by the former prophets.

They hardened their hearts, made them as adamant stone, so that they would not hear the Spirit--hear the law and the words which the Lord of hosts had sent by His Spirit--by the former prophets. Therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts. When a person hardens his heart and will not listen to the Spirit, then God has no alternative but judgment.

So we see a world today that has turned a deaf ear to the reproof of the Holy Spirit. We hear people mocking against a righteous life, mocking Jesus Christ, and mocking the witness of the Spirit. Now the witness of the Holy Spirit to the world is that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the only Savior. Jesus said He is witnessing of sin because they believe not in Him.

The name "Jesus" bespeaks His mission. The angel said,

Thou shalt call His name JESUS [or Joshua]: for he shall save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21)

His name, Jesus, derives from the Greek for the Hebrew, Joshua, which is the contraction of Jehovah Shua, or Jehovah is salvation. He said He came to seek and to save those that were lost. That was His mission. And the Holy Spirit testifies to the world, reproves the world, of sin because they do not believe in Jesus.

It is my belief that the continual rejecting of the witness of the Spirit to the heart of man constitutes the sin of the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. It is the sin that will ultimately consign a person to hell. And when the final day of judgment comes and the books are opened, you will be judged by your works. But the second book is the Book of Life and if your name is not found in the Book of Life, then you will be cast, according to the Scripture, into the lake that is burning with fire. The refusal to accept Jesus Christ, thus not having your name in the Book of Life, is an unpardonable sin.

Jesus said He did not come into the world to condemn the world, but that the world,

through Him, might be saved. And he that believeth is not condemned. Oh, that you would underline that in your mind and in your heart. He that believeth is not condemned. Those words should strike a chord of rejoicing in your soul. He that believeth is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already.

Now the Holy Spirit is reproofing the world of sin because they do not believe in Jesus. "He that does believe is not condemned. But he that believeth not is condemned already," Jesus said, "seeing he has not believed in the only begotten Son of God." This is the issue: your believing in God's provision for your sin, your believing that God sent His only begotten Son who bore your sin, who died in your place. This is the witness of the Holy Spirit. This is the witness of the Spirit to the world.

They are suffering from the conscience. They know that they are not doing what is right, but they will not come to Jesus Christ to receive the cleansing and the forgiveness. So this is the condemnation--that light has come into the world, but they will not come to the light because men love the darkness rather than the light because their deeds are evil.

When Jesus sent His disciples into all the world to preach the gospel, He said,

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. (Mark 16:16)

The whole issue is believing in Jesus Christ. It is the difference between being forgiven and being condemned. That is the whole issue. "Of sin," Jesus said, "because they do not believe in Me." It is interesting He did not say, "Of sin because they are, you know, into pornography, and they are into fornication, and they are into this, and they are into that." No: "Of sin, because they do not believe in Me" (John 16:9).

John testified,

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. (John 3:36)

And then John said if you believe not, actually you are making God a liar. You are making the Holy Spirit a liar. You are blaspheming the Holy Spirit by your rejecting, or your refusal to believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, who bore the sins of the world. If you believe not, you make God a liar, for you do not believe the record that God gave of His Son. You do not believe the testimony of the Holy Spirit concerning Jesus Christ.

Concerning the day of final judgment, Revelation 20 says,

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which was the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:11-15)

Your name is written in the Book of Life by virtue of your believing in Jesus Christ.

Now the Holy Spirit is not only reproofing the world of sin, but He is also reproofing the world of righteousness. Sin is doing the wrong thing. Righteousness is doing the right thing. Righteousness--the Holy Spirit shows to the world what is the right thing to do, the right actions to take, and the right reactions to take. Sin is missing the mark. Righteousness is hitting the mark. And the Holy Spirit bears witness, or reproofs the world of righteousness, by pointing to Jesus Christ as the prime example of righteousness. He is what God intended us to be.

Peter said, "He has set for us an example that we should follow in His steps" (1 Peter 2:21). Do you want to know what God wants of you? Look at Jesus Christ. Do you want to know what God intended man to be? Look at Jesus Christ. And so the Holy Spirit in reproofing the world of righteousness does so by

pointing to Jesus Christ. He is the example. He is what God would have you to be. As you yield--and we will get to this in a further lesson--as you yield to the Holy Spirit the work of the Holy Spirit within you is that of conforming you into the image of Christ.

But to the world, He reproves them of righteousness--again, pointing to Jesus Christ.

Jesus said, "Of righteousness because I ascend unto My Father" (John 16:10). Now the logical question would be, what does the ascension of Jesus Christ testify to us of righteousness? How does the Holy Spirit put the two together? Jesus said, "Of righteousness because I ascend to the Father."

Paul the Apostle tells us that the unrighteous are not going to inherit the kingdom of heaven, in 1 Corinthians 6:9. In Galatians 5, when he lists for us the works of the flesh, Paul adds, "I told you before that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven." So read 1 Corinthians 6:10 in its context and read Galatians 5, the works of the flesh, in its context. And they that do these things--these things are unrighteous things. They are not right. And if you do these things, you are not going to inherit the kingdom of heaven.

In the Book of Revelation we are told that God will not allow anything to enter that defiles, because it would defile heaven. In Ephesians 5, Paul tells us that "no whoremonger or unclean person or covetous man who is an idolater hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." So the Holy Spirit is reproving the world of their unrighteousness as He testifies to them of righteousness and as He points to the ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven.

In Hebrews we are exhorted to "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14). So the Holy Spirit is speaking to us about a holy life, about a righteous life--the denial of the flesh life. But what about the ascension of Jesus into heaven? What does that have to do with it?

Well, we have been talking about the things that will keep a man out of the kingdom of heaven. The works of the flesh will keep a man out of the kingdom of heaven. When Jesus ascended into heaven, God was bearing witness to the world that here is a man who lived such a righteous life that His righteousness grants Him an entrance into the kingdom of heaven. In other words, God is saying, "This is the righteousness that will get you in. This is the righteousness that it takes to get you into the kingdom of heaven."

Now one day Jesus said to His disciples, "Except your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20). And what a shocker that must have been to the disciples, because the scribes and Pharisees were known for their righteousness! They were the fellows who were always straining at gnats and swallowing camels. They were men who were always so careful to demonstrate their righteousness before the people, trying to keep every little jot and tittle of the law, according to their interpretations of it. And they even went beyond the intention of the law in many places, as far as the physical keeping of it. But of course inwardly, they were breaking it all the time because of the attitude of their hearts. But the scribes and Pharisees were known for being righteous and yet Jesus said, "Unless your righteousness exceeds theirs, you are not going to enter the kingdom of heaven."

Do not believe the lies of Satan, whereby he seeks to convince you that somehow God will be persuaded to let all kinds of people into heaven who are basically sincere, good people. Do not believe that God will

tolerate evil or that God will allow evil within the kingdom of heaven--providing you are not too bad. Do not believe that God will give you some kind of special dispensation and allow you to live after the flesh, but still grant you entrance into the kingdom. Read again the list and read the warning. We know that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus lived the kind of life and exemplified the kind of righteousness that God will accept. And by His ascension into heaven God is saying, "This is it. This is the standard that will get you into heaven, a righteousness greater than that of the scribes and the Pharisees." Nothing short of that righteousness can grant you entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

You might say, "Well Chuck, aren't you closing the door to all of us?" Yes, as far as your own righteousness and efforts are concerned, I am. If you are thinking you can get there on the basis of your good works or your good intentions or your efforts--forget it! You will never make it. There is only one way that any of us will find entrance into the kingdom of heaven, and that is through the righteousness of Jesus Christ that is imparted to us by our faith and trust in Him. You cannot perform any kind of service or duty to God that He will accept as admission into the kingdom of heaven. Only by faith in Jesus Christ can you ever find entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

The third thing the Holy Spirit reproves the world of is judgment. And Jesus said, "Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." We earlier read in Revelation concerning what is commonly called, "the great white throne judgment of God." The Holy Spirit is not really reproving the world of that. "Of judgment," He said, "because the prince of this world is judged." Where and when was the prince of this world judged? On the cross of Jesus Christ, the power of Satan was broken. His hold over the earth was wrested. Paul tells us in Colossians 2:13,

And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of the flesh, hath he made quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses, blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it [or in the cross]. (Colossians 2:13-15)

So, on the cross Jesus Christ triumphed over the principalities and powers of darkness. And He made an open display of His victory in the resurrection. He defeated or spoiled those principalities and powers of darkness, which were against us. He triumphed over them on the cross; and thus, the prince of this world has been judged. His authority and his power that he once had has been overcome through the power of Jesus Christ.

Now, when you belong to Jesus and are walking in the Spirit, you have power over the principalities and powers of darkness. The world is still under the power of Satan, but the Holy Spirit bears witness to the world that they do not have to be chained by sin any longer. They do not have to be a captive and be held by the enemy in darkness any longer. You can be free! Jesus broke the chains. And He will break the chains by which Satan is holding you. The prince of this world has been judged. He has been thoroughly defeated and he only holds people by usurped authority and power. Jesus died for the sins of the world and you can be set free from the power of sin. You do not have to live in sin any longer. And this is the witness of the Holy Spirit to the world, as He is seeking to draw men unto Jesus Christ and unto the kingdom of God.

So we have the threefold witness of the Holy Spirit. 1) Of sin, because they do not believe in Jesus. 2) Of righteousness, because Jesus is the standard of righteousness that you must attain if you ever have any hope of entering the kingdom of heaven. And when you look at the righteousness of Christ, you will realize that you cannot attain it in yourself. You are bound up to God's provisions through faith. That is the righteousness that God imputes to the believing sinner. And 3) He then testifies that you do not have to be ruled by sin any more because the prince of this world has been judged. Therefore sin is not to reign in your mortal body any longer.

Writing to the Romans, Paul said,

Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body that ye should obey it in the lusts of thereof. (Romans 6:11-12)

That is a command. Do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey the lust. "Neither yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness" (Romans 6:13). That is, your body; do not yield the members of your body as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin. But yield yourselves unto God and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace" (Romans 6:14). Sin shall not have dominion over you. Satan has been judged. His power has been broken. And you can have, through Jesus Christ, that victory over the powers of darkness. That is the witness of the Holy Spirit to your heart and to the world.

Thank God! I am free. Shall we pray?

Father, we thank You for the work of the Holy Spirit in the world even tonight, a world that is darkened by sin and the powers of darkness. We thank You, that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. That His power still avails and prevails over the powers of darkness. Thank You, Lord, that Your Holy Spirit bore witness of the truth to our hearts and drew us to Jesus Christ. He planted faith in our hearts towards Him whereby our sins were forgiven. The Holy Spirit came in and is bringing to us that righteousness of Christ, as He conforms us into the image of Christ. We thank You, Lord, that through our faith it is imputed as though it was already done and accomplished. We thank You, Lord, the powers of Satan have been broken and we have been set free from the power of sin and the darkness of Satan. He has been judged and sin no longer reigns in our mortal bodies, but the Spirit of God reigns. Lord, fill us with Your Holy Spirit. Lord, draw us by Your Holy Spirit to Jesus Christ and to the fullness that You desire for each of us as we walk in the Spirit, not fulfilling any longer the desires of the flesh. Lord, we desire to be filled until we overflow with the fullness of Your Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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