

# The Spirit of God Pt1

by Ralph Shallis

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*Ralph Shallis emphasizes the critical role of the Holy Spirit in understanding Scripture and living the Christian life amidst spiritual confusion and opposition.*

**Duration:** 49:20

**Scripture:** Luke 16:19

**Topics:** "Spirit Of God"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares personal experiences that have taught him about human nature and the reliance on God. He discusses difficult moral dilemmas, such as being forced to harm others to save oneself. The speaker emphasizes the need to depend on Jesus Christ rather than human abilities to discover truth and live according to God's will. He briefly mentions the five simultaneous actions of the Holy Spirit in believers but does not elaborate on them. The speaker acknowledges that the topic of the Holy Spirit is vast and complex, and he can only provide a framework based on his own study and experiences as a missionary.

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## Transcript

In the background on this recording, you may be able to hear other voices and this is because there were people present from several nations and their friends were giving simultaneous translation to them because of language problems. Now God and Father, we dare not rely on human brains or human feelings or human willpower to discover Christ, to know you, to discern your will, to learn the truth, or to live according to your mind. We depend utterly upon Jesus Christ.

We have only one argument that his blood was shed for us. We have only one resource, which is the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone can teach us, guide us, protect us, and use us, bless us.

And, O Heavenly Father, we ask you, for Christ's sake, that it may be your Holy Spirit himself who shall teach us and control every thought. We know that the enemy of Christ is the enemy of the Spirit of God, and he does and will do everything within his power until he is finally bound and cast into the pit to destroy, to confuse, to annul the work of the Spirit of God. But we resist Satan in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We claim the power of that blessed name of Jesus, the Lord Jesus, and we rely, blessed Father, upon the intercession of Christ at this time. We pray that you will bind every evil force, that you will silence every

tongue raised against the truth of your word, and that your Spirit may lead us into all truth. We ask this for Christ's sake.

Amen. When I was first asked to deal with this subject, my first reaction was one of pleasure and joy. I thought, how marvelous to deal with this subject, which is so vitally important.

My second feelings, especially since coming to England the day before yesterday, and discovering just a little bit about the incredibly complicated spiritual situation back here in England, and the renewed confusion and controversies and conflict around this marvelous subject, made me feel that there was almost any subject I would rather deal with than this one. There are three great subjects in the Bible which Satan hates. He doesn't want to have them taught.

He doesn't want us to face up to them at all. I might say there are four such subjects. The first one is the true doctrine of salvation by faith, justification by faith.

But the three other subjects, which are a matter of great controversy and have been for a long time now, are the subject of the Holy Spirit, and without understanding this subject properly, we can never live the Christian life properly. It's in the interests of Satan to keep us either ignorant or confused, or off on a false track on this subject. He works as hard as he can to keep this subject out of the pulpits and out of our thinking, but if he can't do that, then he brings in any kind of confusion he can.

The second subject is the subject of the Lord's return, and now as the Lord's return is so near, there's no doubt whatever about that, it seems that Satan is drawing a veil of blindness across the church, the church's heart, so that it is a subject that is hardly ever dealt with. You hardly ever hear it preached upon now, partly because of all the controversies, partly because of the confusion, but mainly because Satan just doesn't want it dealt with. He wants us all completely ignorant of what's happening in the world today and what is going to happen in the days to come.

And the third subject, which Satan hates so much, is the subject of the true church of Jesus Christ, because he knows that if only we can recover Christ's real idea of what the church is, the whole world could be turned upside down, literally. And so, dealing with this subject of the Holy Spirit, I can only do it with great humility and a certain amount of trembling, but realising that God's truth is crystal clear, and it has to be spoken, it has to be preached. Wherever I go, I always expect to be thrown out, whether it's in the street or a church or anywhere else.

Just as the old prophets were warned, all the other prophets are speaking peace and saying nice things. Well, you do the same. But the true prophets of God had to answer, Whatever the Lord says to me, I will say.

And most of them got thrown out. And I feel that on a subject like this, all I can do is be utterly faithful and speak what I believe is the truth as God has revealed it to me. I want also to say that I came to no conclusions whatever about this subject or any other Bible subject until I had read through the Bible many, many, many times from beginning to end.

It wasn't until I had read through the Bible about twelve times that I dared to come to any positive conclusions about any doctrines of the Bible. It was finally the clear statement of Scripture here and there in its pages which forced me to certain conclusions. And even now I keep a completely open mind every time I start the Bible again each year for God to correct me.

The most dangerous thing that can ever happen to a Christian is to have a closed mind. The man who knows it all is the man that God can't teach anymore. The book of Proverbs is full of statements about being corrected.

The book of Proverbs tells us that the man who will no longer be corrected, he's a fool. And I pray that God may correct me day by day, minute by minute. I pray that he may teach me anything that I need to know.

And if we are not prepared at all times to let God change all our ideas out of recognition, if we are wrong, then we're in a hopeless case. And the trouble with nearly all spiritual movements is that they begin with a rediscovery of some biblical truth which usually was lost, which they idolize and which becomes a cause of division in the Church of Christ, and finally creates a new sect and eventually spiritual pride and finally develops spiritual pride and finally a closed mind. And then the Spirit of God just pulls right out of the whole movement, the whole Church, and he works in the street.

He works anywhere he can. The classical example, of course, is the great Roman Catholic Church herself. Now, to understand Scripture, there are three basic principles of interpretation.

I do not believe we can expect the Spirit of God to lead us into all truth unless we pay particular attention to these three principles. Before I mention them, I just want to say this. God created man in his image, with a personality, with human reason, with will, feelings.

And God gave man the gift of speech, which is what distinguishes him essentially from the animal on the human level. And the Bible tells us that in the beginning was the Word and that God created all things by the Word, by the Logos, and the Word of God himself or itself became incarnate in Jesus Christ. And therefore it is the Word by which God reveals himself, by which he creates the universe, by which he saves us, by which he reveals truth to us.

And the Spirit of God, revealing God to us, revealing Christ to us, uses the Word. And the Spirit of God had this book, the Bible, written, inspired it and guaranteed the accuracy of the very Word of Scripture, so that we might have, in clear human language, in an indisputable form, in a way that we can really grasp, we can have the true mind of God. Therefore, we should pay particular attention to what the Spirit of God says about himself in the Word of God.

Now, Christ said in his last prayer before Gethsemane, he prayed that God would sanctify us by his truth, and he added, Thy Word is truth. Now, the Bible is the only source of truth that we have. I know we have the truth that comes to us through nature, through science, but that is unintelligible on the spiritual level unless it is interpreted by the Bible itself.

That is why most of the greatest thinkers and wise men and scientists don't know God. They can't know God unless they have the Bible. Now, these are the three principles for interpreting the Bible.

First of all, we must take only the Bible. If you say, yes, but Luther says this, and Calvin says that, or somebody else says this, or that, or the other, or St. Augustine, or the Pope, or Derby, you are adding to Scripture. What God said through some of those men was true, and very valuable, and very precious, and there's no point in throwing it in the dustbin.

But we cannot base our doctrine on Derby, or Augustine, or Origen, or anybody else. We can only base our doctrine on the Word of God. If the Word of God isn't enough, we might just as well put it in the dustbin.

The Word of God is enough by itself, and this is the most precious truth that the Reformers recovered for us, and that the beginning of the Brethren movement brought back to us. But every time this truth just disappears and gets cluttered up under a lot of human reasonings and traditions. So we must take only the Bible.

We must therefore come to the Bible with a completely clear and open mind, saying, Lord, I put all my other ideas on one side, now you just teach me direct, you speak to me direct, it's you that I want to hear. I cannot tell you what a blessing it was to me when I was a young fellow of about 22, 23, when after four or five years of Christian life, without making any real spiritual progress at all, God told me to start reading my Bible right through each year. This revolutionized my whole life, and gave me a vision of God such as it's impossible to describe.

But reading my Bible, I realized very soon that it was fatal to come to it with preconceived ideas. And so I deliberately put on one side all the things that people had told me about God, about Christ, about the Bible, all my ideas and my prejudices, and I said, Lord, take my soul like virgin soil or like a clean sheet of paper, and you just write on it, you just plant in it what you want, it's you that I want to hear. And I do thank God that in those days I didn't, as I sometimes thought of doing, go to a Bible school or theological college, I'm not against these things, but I thank God that long before anything like that could happen in my life, God spoke to me direct.

God gave me an open vision of himself, and he spoke his own word right through the whole fiber of my soul, year after year, so that I had my knowledge of God direct from himself, and I got my knowledge of the Bible direct from God. Many years afterwards, when I'd been through the Bible ten or twelve times, and after the war, when I was free to have access to other books, I started reading right and left and examining the conclusions of many other people, and I've done so ever since. But I have never stopped giving the Bible the first place in my life, every single day.

And nothing can possibly replace this direct, open vision of God into your own soul through meeting him without any kind of human intermediary, only Christ. Well, if you miss that at the beginning of your life, you'll probably never get it. And I thank God he gave it to me before I was too old, and before people could force my thinking into some particular mode, which was perhaps good or bad.

But everything we get through men is distorted. Even through the best of men, there's always a certain element of distortion. We never get the whole, pure truth through any human being.

We can only get it through Christ himself. And while it's very valuable to receive the things that God does give us, and women of God, yet we must make a clear distinction between all that and what comes to us from God direct. Nothing can replace the direct, face-to-face revelation of God to our own soul.

Because God is love, and God wants to deal with us direct. If you're in love with a girl, you're not going to be satisfied by passing all your love letters back and forwards between me or somebody else, so that you don't actually speak to the girl, you don't see her, you don't touch her. When you love, when you're in love, there's only one thing that matters.

You want to be face-to-face with the person that you love. And God wants to bring us into that sort of relationship with himself. And you can't get that unless you meet God face-to-face, and unless you take his word alone, and let God just speak to you, smite you to the ground, break his heaven open, and just write with a finger of fire on your very heart the words that he wants to say to you.

And the words are most of all, that I love you, and I want to pour my love through you to a broken, lost world. The second principle of interpretation is that we must take the whole Bible. And very few people do this.

They dib and dob around, or they just take a verse out of its context, one verse, just as the Roman Catholics have taken one verse out of Matthew 16, You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and they've built the whole papal system on that verse. If you take that verse away from them, they've got no scriptural foundation whatever left for their whole structure. And if you put that verse back in its context, likewise their whole structure just falls to pieces.

They just take one verse out of its context and build a vast medieval papal system upon it. And it's extremely dangerous just to base doctrine on certain passages of the Bible. You've got to take everything that God says.

Christ said, man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. Now until you have studied your Bible through and through and through, I don't believe you're in any position to come to any clear, concise, conclusive doctrine about the Holy Spirit, or anything else. I know God gives us direct, intuitive revelations.

I know he speaks to us. You don't need to read your Bible through twenty times in order to be saved. After five minutes of hearing of Christ crucified for your sins and risen again, you can be saved.

I know that. But if you start becoming a Bible teacher and laying down the law five minutes after you're saved about the whole theology of salvation, you'll find yourself in serious difficulties. Therefore, the only way to deal with a subject like this is simply to go steadily through the whole Scriptures, year by year, classifying your discoveries.

I find it's most useful to do what I did. I had a notebook of classified references, and as I went through the Bible the third, fourth and fifth times, I became very interested in what the Bible said about quite a number of things. About the call of the man of God, about the prayer of faith, about the inspiration of Scripture itself, and many other things.

Each year, God added to my list of subjects that gripped me. In the end, I found a notebook or two just wasn't enough. I had to have a loose-leaf notebook system like this.

I would have one notebook for one subject, another notebook for another subject. As I learned more and more things, I'd push them down on a bit of paper, I'd punch some holes in, and then I'd slip it into my notebooks in the right place. Year by year, as I went on steadily reading my Bible each day, God began to build up a really clear, cohesive idea in my mind of what God himself thinks about many subjects.

This was fantastic, and it did two things for me. First of all, it clarified my own thinking. It gave me a clear idea of what God says about different things.

And secondly, I discovered, to my astonishment, after three or four years, that I'd got a terrific fund of material for preaching. I wasn't a preacher at that time. I wasn't interested in preaching.

But from the day when God said to me, You can't keep this for yourself. And God told me to get the whole village together in that little Alpine canton where I lived in Switzerland, to get the whole village together and to tell them what God had given me in the two or three years previous. From that time, I discovered I

was a preacher, and I found I had a job to do.

But I was amazed to find what an abundance there was in my heart, and it was out of the abundance of my heart that my mouth spoke. But if you haven't got that abundance, if you haven't got the whole word of God written into all the fibre and texture of your thoughts, if you haven't reached the point where God is actually thinking through your brain all the time with his thoughts, well, the devil can very easily hook you up on all kinds of little side issues and confuse your thinking about many important subjects. Now, the third way, the third principle for interpreting the Bible is that we must interpret the Bible by itself, by the Bible.

We must interpret Scripture by Scripture, not by Calvin, not by me, not by brother so-and-so. If God can't explain his own word, well, who can understand it? The great error of most of the Roman Catholics is that they say that you can't understand the Bible, you've got to have it interpreted for you by the church, by the priest, by the theologian, by the Vatican and so forth. Whereas actually, the Bible does interpret itself.

Now, to understand any one particular doctrine in the Bible, therefore you need to get together all the passages that speak about it, and then you have to look and find which is the clearest passage, or the clearest passages, where there is no possible doubt about the meaning of the thing, or where you have clear statements in black and white of what the thing is all about. And then you take these clear passages as the key to understand all the others. If you don't do that, you can fall into any heresy that the devil wants to bring you into.

As Jehovah's Witnesses, they find one or two obscure verses in the book of Ecclesiastes, which says that the dead don't know anything anymore, and they build all their doctrine of the annihilation of the soul at death on those two or three odd little verses in the Old Testament, which are ambiguous to say the least, and which are taken out of their context again, without reference to the drift of the whole book of Ecclesiastes. And when you put under their noses Luke chapter 16, where Christ gives us the picture of the poor man in Abraham's bosom and the rich man in Hades tortured with the flame, and you say, well, what about that? Christ taught that there was not an afterlife, but an after-existence, and that you're either in bliss or you're in torment. They say, oh, Christ was just taking up the doctrine of the Pharisees and making fun of them and turning it back on themselves.

Well, if that's the way we're going to interpret the Bible, as I say, I would put mine straight in the dustbin. If that's all the Bible, we can get out of the Bible. It's hopeless.

This is what Catholics do, this is what Mormons do, this is what all the great false cults do with the Bible, this is what Spiritists do with the Bible. And so, friends, in our understanding of the doctrine of the Spirit of God himself who wrote this book, we need to search for the passages that are unmistakably clear and take them as the clue for understanding all the rest. Now, I've taken up about half of my time this morning with these introductory remarks, but I think they're necessary.

I just want to say one or two more introductory remarks. This time in which we are living is a critical time. The church of my generation, as you know, at any rate in Britain, went bankrupt a long time ago, spiritually bankrupt.

It's been living no longer on capital but on credit. And I'm surprised that the whole thing hasn't folded up long ago. I'm surprised that we're not all behind barbed wire.

I think that if God hadn't done things like OM, long ago we'd all have been behind barbed wire, or else the other side of the barbed wire, accusing the brethren. I believe that at this time God is working in a new way. He's working very little within the established orders, within the structured churches, as we say in French.

God is working anywhere, in the street, in homes, in houses. He's working here. He's doing things which a few years ago would have seemed quite out of all context to the average Christian.

The Spirit of God isn't bound. And when we try to put him in a cardboard box and label him up, we find that he isn't there anymore. There's nothing there.

And the Spirit of God has his own way of working. And I believe that at the present time God is working. The Spirit of God is doing something new in the world.

He's determined to get the world evangelized. This is what Christ died for. This is Christ's whole objective.

He came to seek and to save that which was lost. And if the church is seeking and saving what is lost, if the church hasn't this number one objective, she has just lost her main reason for existence and she's really on the way out. But I believe there's an enormous danger facing all you people.

When I was young, there was still quite a lot of godly Bible teaching in the churches and assemblies that I knew. Nowadays that is nearly all gone. What can you expect from an elder or a minister who's been looking at the television ten times as much as he's been reading his Bible all the week? There's a spiritual dearth today.

And yet the Spirit of God is raising up multitudes of young people like you all over the place and in country after country around the world. You're not getting the foundation teaching that my generation got when I was young. You're not getting it in the churches.

Where can you get it from? Now I am convinced that all this great wave of energy that the Spirit of God is raising up, it's a marvellous thing. But if there isn't the full impact of the whole truth of God's Word, you can be absolutely certain that Satan will do everything he can in order to bring in some sort of deviation and confusion so that in the end all that just fizzles out. But in ten years, in fifteen years from now, if we're still this side of the barbed wire, I wonder how many of us will be going on with the Lord.

The pressures today are terrific. The worst pressure of all comes from that little idiot box, as they call it, the TV set in nearly everybody's house. That's where the biggest pressure comes from.

And Satan is just brainwashing us all, brainwashing the church, day and night, conditioning our thinking, so that when Big Brother finally comes on and takes over to save the world situation, everybody will just have their eyes glued to his face, just as Hitler led the whole German nation up the Garden Path by the end of its nose, simply with the radio. And I believe that the only thing that can give us clear thinking and a solid basis for our faith is a really profound knowledge of the Bible. If you don't get this now, in these next few years, I don't think you'll ever be able to stand the pressures from within and without.

You won't be able to discern between true and false. You'll get hooked up and you'll probably find yourself on the wrong side. You know, I had six years of war.

I didn't want that. I didn't want to be in an army. I didn't want to see all the filthy and horrible things that I had to see.

But God taught me a lot of things through that, and he taught me most of all what human nature really is. You know, when you've got a bayonet stuck in your back, and you've got a bayonet in your hand, and you're told to stick yours in the belly of the man in front of you, if not, you'll get the other bayonet in your back, what do you do? When you're told that if you don't torture a man to get information out of him, you're going to be tortured yourself, what do you do? When you're told that if you don't obey what the state's telling you to do, your mother's going to disappear, or your wife's going to disappear, or your child's going to disappear, what do you do? When that kind of pressure comes on, where will our faith be? I believe that Jesus Christ can save us in any situation. He may not save us from death or martyrdom or suffering, but I believe he can save us spiritually in any situation that can possibly exist on this earth.

If he can't do that, he certainly can't save us from hell. I believe in Christ for everything. To believe in Christ means that I commit myself to him totally, body, soul and spirit, for all eternity, and I trust him in every possible situation.

And of course, if I can't trust him for little questions, things like money and marriage now, how do you think I'm ever going to trust him to save me from hell or to save me from any other situation? We have to trust him for everything, and this is faith. Well, I would like to deal with the subject in a sort of skeleton form. It's impossible for me to give you in three sessions a really adequate teaching on the Holy Spirit.

To be precise, I would need 19-hour sessions to give you just the basic teaching. But all I can do is give you a sort of framework. I can give you a summary of what the Lord has shown me over many, many years of Bible study and experience, and much of this, if not all of it, has been lived out in actual experience as a missionary and in many other circumstances of life.

I'm not just putting across a mere theory that I've got out of books or out of a Bible school. There are things that I've got from God himself and which I've had to live out in my life. I know that I'm only just a mere beginner and a very poor sort of Christian, but I just hope that these things will form a basis for your thinking.

And I don't want you to believe my conclusions. What I want is that you should go to God and go to the Word of God for yourself and get your conclusions from God himself. That's what I want.

But if the things I say can help you and save you several years of searching on certain points, well then, I just thank God for it. I would like to deal with this subject under three main headings, three main sections. First of all, the initial work of the Spirit of God.

It's sevenfold--the sevenfold initial work of the Spirit of God in salvation. I'll give you the headings for those seven things in a minute. And secondly, the sevenfold progressive or continuous work of the Holy Spirit after salvation, or in sanctification, if you like.

And finally, if there's time on the last morning, I would like to deal with the four commandments concerning the Holy Spirit. There are only four, which includes the three conditions for being filled with the Spirit of God. Now, the seven initial operations of the Spirit of God, what he does to save us.

The first one is the one that leads up to salvation. The next five all happen simultaneously at salvation. And the seventh one normally happens also at salvation, but can be lost and may have to be recovered

again.

Let us look at the first one. In the Gospel of John, chapter 16, it's the convicting work of the Spirit of God, but I prefer the word convincing because convict has come to have a peculiar meaning in English. Convicting means convicting someone of sin or of a crime, whereas the Greek word is simply to convince.

The convincing work of the Spirit of God. In verse 8, we read, When he, that is, the Spirit of God, comes, he will convince the world. We can't convince the world.

It's the Spirit of God that convinces. Now notice that he convinces the world of three things. I think I must have read the Bible through thirty times before I even began to understand this verse.

He convinced the world of sin and righteousness and judgment. And then Christ explains in the next two verses. Of sin, because they do not believe in me.

Of righteousness, because I go to my Father and you see me no more. Of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. Well, usually when we talk about conviction, as I say, we mean conviction of sin.

But in our preaching, in our evangelizing, our main concern is not so much to convince a chap of the sin of adultery or murder or blasphemy or dishonesty. In his heart he knows these things are sin. And the primary work of the Spirit of God isn't so much to convince a man of sins.

It's to convince him of one particular sin. It's of sin because they do not believe in me. It's to convince the man of the sin of unbelief in Christ.

Now to the man in the street, that isn't a sin at all. If you stopped a man in the street outside here in Birmingham and said, what do you consider is the greatest possible sin? He'd probably laugh, but he might say, oh well, murder or something else like that. You say, no, the greatest possible sin is not to believe in Jesus Christ.

Well, he'd just laugh in your face. And yet this is the damning sin, this is the only sin that Christ couldn't die for on the cross. It is basically the unforgivable sin, the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

And it is only the Spirit of God which can bring a man to a realization of his supreme condemnation and sin in not believing in Christ. And of course, the man can only come to such a conviction, to such a state of being convinced, if he knows enough about Jesus Christ. And therefore, in our presentation of the Gospel, the most important thing is the presentation all the time of Jesus Christ.

In evangelizing the Muslims, the Catholics, people who've never had the New Testament in their hands, I always feel that the supremely important thing is to get them to read or to listen to the story and words of Jesus Christ. Get a portrait of Jesus Christ created in their minds by the Spirit of God. It's this that brings the final conviction.

They're convinced of the truth of it and they're convinced of the error of rejecting it. Until people have some idea of Christ, some portrait of Christ in their mind, their position is nebulous, they're neither for nor against. But once this portrait is created by the Spirit of God in their mind, once they know who Jesus Christ is, they have to take a position for or against.

Then the second thing that the Spirit of God convinces of, this is all a part of the first operation, the convincing work of the Spirit, is righteousness because I go to my Father. What does that mean? Well, the

Ascension was simply the culmination of the Resurrection. And it is only as we believe that Jesus Christ is alive, risen today, that we can ever be saved.

Nobody can be saved by a dead Christ, nobody can be saved by a false Christ. But the Resurrection was simply the sequence of the cross, of the death of Christ. In other words, the Spirit of God convinces men of the atoning death of Christ and of the real fact of His Resurrection, the fact that Christ is at the right hand of God now.

We can't convince people of this, but the Spirit of God does, and He uses above all the words of Scripture to do these things. And finally, He convinces the man of judgment because the ruler of this world is judged. In chapter 12, just before going to the cross, Christ said in verse 23, The hour has come, and a little further down, in verse 31, He said, Now is the judgment of this world.

Now shall the ruler of this world be cast out. So speaking of His crucifixion, He spoke of it as the judgment of the world and the judgment of Satan. From the moment that Satan had the Son of God put on the cross, Satan's doom was finally sealed.

There was no possible hope that Satan may ever find any loophole in order to obtain the grace of God. Satan sealed his own doom forever when he crucified Jesus Christ. And, of course, Satan used the world to do it.

And the world itself is guilty of the murder of Jesus Christ. It's true, our hands didn't actually put Him on the cross, but if we'd been there in those circumstances, if we'd been the Roman soldiers, we should have put Him on the cross, we should have crowned Him with thorns. If we'd been in the praetorium when they mocked Him, we would almost certainly have spat upon Him and tortured Him.

If we had been in the Sanhedrin, almost certainly we would have been among those who condemned Him to death. And the whole world is implicated in the murder of Jesus Christ. God considers the whole world under condemnation because the world is under the control of the God of this world, who is Satan.

He is the prince of this world. Therefore, the Spirit of God convincing a man of the truth of the sin of rejecting Christ and of the truth that Christ is now alive after His atoning death, He now brings me to a point of decision. I've got to dissociate myself from this world system and its God.

I've got to take a stand against the whole system. I've got to identify myself with Jesus Christ. And this means identifying myself with Jesus who was crucified by this world.

I accept to be crucified with Christ, if necessary, literally. And now I'm at the crossroads. I've got to choose.

And there God leaves us utterly free. The Spirit of God brings a man to this point where he's fully enlightened, he's tasted of the Word of God, and he's made a partaker of the Spirit of God in a certain sense, and now God says, now are you going through or are you... And if the man says yes, that's all he can do. That's all he can do about being saved.

But if he says yes to Jesus Christ... I do accept, I do want to be identified with Christ. God says, OK, I identify you with Him. And in that moment we're identified with Jesus Christ, we're saved.

But if I say no, I believe I've committed the unpardonable sin. I believe this is Hebrew 6. The man who knows all about it and who in cold blood says, no, I don't want Jesus Christ. Well then God says, OK, that's your choice, I respect your choice.

And the Spirit of God just leaves you alone forever and ever. That is what has happened not only to individuals but to spiritual movements. It happened to the generation that put Jesus Christ on the cross.

Christ said in Matthew 12, that will never be forgiven. And indeed it wasn't forgiven. Forty years later, by the time that generation had lived its time out, Jerusalem was destroyed and most of the Jews were dead and the rest were just carted all around the world as prisoners.

So you see, the convicting work of the Spirit of God brings us to the point of faith. Faith or unbelief. And faith is when I just take hold of Christ.

Now, when I identify myself with Christ and God identifies me with Him, the Spirit of God acts. Up till now, He's been acting in what I call a prenatal stage. I think all of us are baffled by the way so many people seem to be saved, seem to be going on with the Lord and really understand and are even quite active sometimes in Christian service and then one day they just go right back and they lose all interest and you can never speak to them again of Jesus Christ.

Well, I think those people are people like those in Hebrews 6 who have been enlightened but they were never born again. They never had that catastrophic experience that Jesus Christ calls the new birth. The new birth is something colossal.

It makes you a child of God. It brings the Spirit of God to live inside you and your whole heart is regenerate. You have the law of God written into your heart and God has wiped out all your sins.

What could you have more marvellous than that, except the development of it to the greatest possible degree? So when I believe in Christ, the Spirit of God acts and He does five things in me simultaneously. I haven't time to deal with those this morning. I'll have to try and work a good deal into the next session.

But I can just deal with these briefly. I can tell you what these five things are. I'm going to astonish many of you and some of you will not agree with me.

I have no doubt. Well, just let me say this. If you don't agree with me on all questions of biblical terminology or if I don't agree with you, that is no reason why we shouldn't love one another.

God is so great, so marvellous, so complex that there isn't one of us that can grasp the full meaning of what God is. Each of us has only just a little fragmentary knowledge of God. Even the greatest men of God, even Paul, after years and years of suffering and founding churches, when he wrote to the Philippians after three years in prison, he said, I still don't reckon that I've got it.

I'm just pressing on for the prize of the high calling of God so that I may know Christ. And attain to the resurrection from the dead. Paul meant in this life, live in this life, as if he were already raised again from the dead.

Paul said, I haven't got there yet. I could even now be a castaway after all that I've done. I'm saved.

I know I'm saved. I know I shall rise again from the dead and be in the kingdom of God, but I don't know whether I'm really going to get a reward there, whether I'm going to get a really good job in that kingdom or

whether I'll just be pushing a broomstick around. And, well, I think perhaps I'll have to stop altogether.

I see there are just two minutes. But what I was saying was, we are not meant to quarrel over Bible doctrines. Let us just bear this in mind.

Christ said that just after he had instituted the Last Supper, the new covenant in the Last Supper, after he'd washed his disciples' feet and he'd given them the cup and he said, this is the New Testament in my blood, he said, now I'm giving you a new commandment, a new law. Christ said in Matthew 5, I haven't come to abolish the law, to destroy the law, but to fulfil it. And yet Christ came with a new law which accompanied the new commandment, which accompanied the new covenant.

What is the new law? Christ said, this is it, that you, my disciples, that you should love one another as I have loved you. Well, now, the next morning, on the cross, the disciples could see how much Jesus Christ loved them. And Jesus said, this is how all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another, if you love each other as I have loved you.

Now, in John 15, Christ says that, as the Father has loved me, even so have I loved you. If you can imagine all the love that could possibly exist in the universe, synthesised together and multiplied by infinity, we still wouldn't have any real conception of what the love of the Father is for his Son, in the person of God. And yet Christ said, as the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.

And the only way Christ could express that love was in his crucifixion the next day. And Christ said, this is the mark of discipleship, this is the mark of the Christian, that you Christians love each other as I have loved you, and as the Father has loved me. Well, now, this is the most important thing in the whole New Testament, after conversion.

It's the most important commandment. And in John 15, Christ says, this is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. So Christ calls it the new commandment, the new law that accompanies the new covenant, and he calls it my commandment.

And that very same evening, with the tears probably streaming down his face, he said to his disciples, if you love me, keep my commandments, but especially this one. So, friends, if as a result of these three days of study on the Holy Spirit we go around squabbling and criticizing and accusing each other and splitting up into factions and sections, let us just say to ourselves, we haven't even begun to understand the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit wants to unite us in the love of Christ.

He wants to unite the body of Christ, not chop it up into little pieces. He doesn't want to split it in two, from top to bottom. The Spirit of God doesn't divide the body of Christ.

He builds it up, he unites it. And the true teaching of the Holy Spirit is meant to unite us all together. We may not all be able to agree on all points of terminology.

It's impossible to find two Christians who are completely agreed mentally on all points of doctrine. If we had to have everybody in complete agreement on all points of doctrine, well, you'd have as many different churches as there are different people in this room. Each one of us would be a little church all on his own.

And in every church we have to learn to give and take a good deal. In every team, apostolic team, we have to learn to give and take a good deal. There are many things we can't explain, there are many things that we can't understand.

We've got to be patient and we have to learn from one another. But above all we have to learn from the Word of God. And in conclusion I just want to say this.

I'm sorry I haven't been able to get deeper into the subject itself, but Christ only left his church two ceremonies. All other religions have lots of ceremonies and symbols. Christ left us only two symbols, the breaking of bread and baptism.

And these two symbols were meant to unite his disciples in his person in an indissoluble unity and Christian fellowship. But Satan has used these two things all down through the last 2,000 years to split the church up into factions and to denigrate the name of Jesus Christ. If the breaking of bread or baptism in my mind are a cause of division in the church of Christ or divide me from my brother or my sister, then I am a carnal Christian.

I'm not a Christian filled with the Spirit of God because the Spirit of God teaches me to love my brother and esteem him better than myself. And this is the only way that we can come to an understanding of the Spirit of God which will enable us to work together with his real power and blessing. Father, we commit to you the study we have made this morning, these introductory remarks, and we pray that as we get into the matter more deeply in the next two days that you will give us a heart of true spiritual understanding and love and compassion and discernment and that you will give us a great respect for one another and that above all things we may grasp the essential things and that instead of simply getting hold of a doctrine or an experience we may have Christ himself.

We ask it in his name. Amen.

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