

# Holy Spirit, Church and Nations - Part 3

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*The sermon emphasizes the vital role of the Holy Spirit in establishing holiness within the church and combating the influence of unholy spirits.*

**Duration:** 33:44

**Scripture:** John 14:26, Acts 1:5, 2 Corinthians 6:14

**Topics:** "Holy Spirit"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a simple story to illustrate the importance of maintaining spiritual life and avoiding hypocrisy. The story involves two students who confess their secret drinking and seek forgiveness from God. The entire college comes together in prayer and fasting, and God honors their faith by providing them with financial provision. The speaker emphasizes that Satan's objective is to make a link with his unholy kingdom, and warns against compromising with evil. The sermon also highlights the principle that material needs can serve as a spiritual barometer, indicating the need for repentance and confession of sin.

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## Transcript

In the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel by John, John's Gospel, chapter fourteen and verse twenty-six, but the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name. Book of the Acts, chapter one, verse five. John indeed baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

The message is in the title, the Holy Spirit. We have sought in earlier messages to make clear that the Holy Spirit lays the foundation for all the work of God in the character of Jesus. Makes the character of Jesus the basis of all his work.

And we, last night, were occupied with the Holy Spirit and the spirit of truth. That great feature, characteristic of the Lord Jesus, truth. This morning we are going to think about the Holy Spirit and the spirit of holiness, the Holy Spirit.

In the New Testament he is referred to as such somewhere about eighty times, which in itself is a very impressive thing, the Holy Spirit. I am perfectly well aware that this subject of holiness or sanctification can be a very heavy going matter, can be oppressive. I confess to you that for a long time this was the one subject I never enjoyed looking into, or having anything to do with.

It can make for difficulty. That is very largely due to the fact that it as a subject has been resolved into various systems of teaching. Made respectively the ground of particular cults and movements, and even taking on the name of a church, the Holiness Church.

And this whole matter has brought many Christians into bondage, and into confusion, frustration of life, that is mainly due to holiness or sanctification being focused down upon some particular aspects of human life. When you come to ask people what they mean, you usually find that they refer to certain common themes in human nature. And if you are delivered, or can be delivered, or want to be delivered from those, then that is holiness.

I am not saying that holiness does not mean that. But holiness is a very much bigger, greater thing than any of our systems, or our crystallized teachings, or our movements, or our foci of application. This is not intended to bring anybody either into bondage, or into a life of struggle and strain.

I think it is just in this very connection that Satan has shown his cleverness. He himself brought about an unholy condition, and then he turns upon his own poor victims, and brings them under terrible condemnation and accusations, and brings about a constellation of complexes, so that they are all tied up on this matter of sin, and sanctification, and holiness. That certainly ought not to be the effect of the matter.

It is just the opposite to what is intended to be. Now, it's a matter, of course, which goes far beyond the limits of one brief half hour. But I do want to seek to get this matter into its right perspective.

For, at the outset, holiness must be seen in its full setting. We're not stopping to argue that this is the supreme characteristic of God. We have to see it in its full background.

The Holy Spirit is set over against an unholy spirit. And the Holy Spirit is a person. And just as truly, there is a personal unholy spirit.

And you have to see this whole matter of holiness in that light. Satan it is, who has brought in an unholy state. Not only an unholy condition, that is true.

But I use that word state with a capital S, as we speak of the state, or the kingdom, or the regime, the system, the government, the state. Satan has brought in an unholy condition and an unholy kingdom or state. He has defiled everything.

He has defiled human nature. He has defiled the creation. He has defiled everything.

And the proof is in the universality of death. God's verdict upon all that is unclean, that is defiled, that has been touched by Satan. It is therefore impressive and instructive to note that immediately Jesus had been anointed by the Holy Spirit.

He entered upon a direct and immediate battle with Satan himself. From the Jordan straight to the wilderness to meet and encounter this arch-soul of all righteousness. As Jesus went into his baptism, he said to John, thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.

And in figure and representation, his baptism as a type of his cross, death, burial and resurrection was the fulfillment of all righteousness. Now then, on that ground, he encounters the embodiment of all unrighteousness. And this is under the anointing that he does it.

The Spirit of holiness, the Holy Spirit, takes the righteous one to encounter the universality of unrighteousness as represented by Satan there in the wilderness. I say it's impressive and it is very instructive to note that that was the very first thing after the anointing, after the baptism. Now the object and the method of Satan is always to make a link with his Satan.

To make a link with his kingdom, thereby making a link with his defilement. Remember that. Let me repeat it.

The object and the method of Satan is always to try to bring about some complicity. Some touch, some foothold, some link with his own evil unholy kingdom or state or condition. That is what was happening in that battle.

All the time, Satan, from one angle and from another, moving around, was trying to involve that righteous one in his unrighteous kingdom. You're not going to argue out those three temptations, but it's perfectly clear, at last it comes out, if thou will worship me. If only you will recognize me, accept me.

Give me a place. If only thou would worship me, all this will I give thee. Only, in other words, I can get you onto my ground.

I've spoiled your kingdom. I've spoiled you. I have established myself so I can make that link.

Blessed be God that holy and righteous one saw through it all and said, no, not a hoof, not one iota, nothing for Satan. The prince of this world cometh to me and hath nothing. Give me that victory.

Absolute victory. Now remember then, what was true in his case is always true. Satan is ever seeking to find some way in which he can link us in with his kingdom, which is his power, by getting us onto his ground.

Hence, all those Old Testament prescriptions made by God against contamination, against mixture, thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together. Nothing wrong with the ox and the ass, that's what Jesus rode upon an ass, and the ass serves many a good purpose in the Bible, but they belong to two realms, two kingdoms, and represent two orders of life, and you cannot mix them up, says God. The work of God must not be done on the basis of mixture of two things which belong to two different kingdoms and realms.

Thou shalt not wear cotton and wool together in thy garments. They belong to two kingdoms, there's nothing wrong with wool that God clothed the man, his wife, with the skins of animals, of wool, nothing wrong with the wool in itself. I suppose all the patriarchs wore woolen garments, but here, together, woven together, they belong to two realms, and God is simply saying this, you must not try to bring together things that don't belong to each other.

It's a foreshadowing of this great principle. Remember, when the remnant came back from captivity, the rebuilding of the temple and the walls, the whole thing headed up. In the book of Ezra, the whole thing headed up to this, the mixed marriage, and when that was settled, the book closes.

The book closes, that's the end, it's all right, now we've got to the point. The mixed marriages between the people of God and other idolatrous nations, these two things must not come together, be not unequally used. God will not have it.

See, this is the whole point of holiness. In its right setting, it is providing Satan with what he is always seeking, trying to work towards, a link with his own kingdom. Now, this is very thorough going, and it is very comprehensive.

For instance, let us allow this principle to take us right into the first letter to the Corinthians, because this is the thing, you know, that explains everything in that book. Here in this first letter to the Corinthians, you first of all begin with the wisdom of this world. The wisdom of this world.

You know what the apostle says about it there, and then listen to an apostle later. The wisdom that is from beneath is demoniacal. Wisdom of this world.

Demoniacal. Well, so the word says. So the word says.

And if we want the proof of that, come back to Paul's argument that it was in the wisdom of this world that Christ was crucified. It was thought to be the wise thing to put him to death. What folly.

What madness. What devilishness. In the wisdom of this world.

Yes, and anybody who really touches that knows that it's a realm of death. I don't know, I don't suppose anybody here, maybe one or two, have dipped into philosophy. But if you have, you know that there is no more deadly thing in all the sciences than philosophy.

You touch it, you touch death. Wisdom in Corinth. The wisdom of this world.

Ah yes, Satan got a good foothold inside that church. Along that line. He got them onto his ground right enough.

The next thing, divisions among you. Divisions among you. Remember, and this may be anticipated, the Holy Spirit is essentially the spirit of unity.

There are divisions among you. Satan has got them onto his ground. For he is the grip divider.

Satan never stops until he has divided the last thing. He comes to one, he'll make two of it. Never stops.

Divisions among you. They're on his ground. Nothing needs to be said about the next thing mentioned, fornication.

But then you move on to the Lord's table. You hear the apostle saying you cannot, you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. You can't mix these things up like this.

But it was there in Corinth. It was there. And listen.

You've got to read that tenth chapter of the first letter to the Corinthians in this life. In this life. Oh don't extract subjects from that chapter about women wearing hats or head coverings All those difficult things, just lift them right out.

The eleventh chapter. Lift them out as separate subjects. If you do, you just get into confusion.

Look here. What the apostle was dealing with, there was the coming in amongst the Lord's people of the spirit of this world. That's how the world behaves, or misbehaves.

That's how the world does it. And that world is Satan's world. And if you let this sort of thing in.

This sort of thing. Study it in this life. All these details.

Practical matters. You let these things in. It is not just that you are having to deal with an apostle whom you think had not too much of a liking for women.

And so on. You know. No, no.

You are up against tremendous things here. It is Satan seeking to get inside and get a foothold. A link between what is holy and what is his.

In order that defiling or bringing the world in. Touching with his corruption requirements. He may destroy that thing of God.

Read it all in that life. For that is where the New Testament puts it. Lest, lest Satan should get an advantage.

See the whole of the bulwark is raised against this one. This unholy spirit that is in the universe. This corrupting influence and power.

This defiling work is raised against that. Church is always to be on its guard against these spirits of uncleanness that are everywhere. Why? Because of the power of holiness.

It is not just to have a clean condition. As something in itself. Oh, don't make holiness an end in itself.

Just to be something in itself. No, it is the power. The mighty power of holiness.

Remember that in the Bible. And it is so clearly and strongly illustrated in the Old Testament. Holiness is always militant.

It was the priests that led them into battle. It was the sacrifice that was the ground of the warfare. The most impressive thing that even the Levites are spoken of as set apart for their warfare.

Levites, priests set apart for warfare. Of course, they were set apart to offer sacrifices and fear all that. No.

Holiness is militant. It is a mighty power against one who is militant. Our warfare is with principalities and powers.

They are making war. There is no doubt about it. They make war.

What is the ground of our hope? Oh, it is not our phraseology, our language, our terminology or our doctrine. It is our holiness of life. That is the point of a text.

Unholiness, unholiness puts God back. God is holy. The Holy Spirit is holy.

And unholiness just keeps them back or puts them back. It binds their hand. They can't do anything.

It is as though the Lord is bound in the midst of his people and helpless, paralyzed when there is unholiness. I pulled a book out of a bookshelf this week. A book that I haven't read for a long time, for many years.

As I was turning the pages, I came on this. It is just one simple fragmentary illustration of what I mean because it brings us to a very practical point. It is the story of a Christian college that was carried on by prayer and by faith with all its support.

It says this. I am going to read this to you. I don't often read something out of a book to you here.

The college was based on the simplicity of daring faith in God for the provision of needs. As long as the spiritual life of the men was maintained, the necessary funds came in, in answer to prayer. If supplies failed to come in or were low with no sign of replenishment, it was recognized that the finger of God was on some failing or unconfessed sin among them.

And not until this was put right would supplies come in. Thus, the meeting of the material needs became, as it were, the spiritual barometer. One instance of this may be recorded.

Funds were so low that a meeting was held and the students urged to a more complete surrender to God. Still matters did not improve and it was felt that possibly the men were not devoting sufficient time to prayer. So the curriculum was curtailed and more time devoted to prayer.

But still no supplies. And finally all funds came to an end and there was only the garden produce left. Then late one night two students came to the tutor and confessed secret drinking.

He gave urgent advice to repair to God and confess their sin and plead forgiveness. Not for the sake of the loaves and fishes, but because of the leaven of hypocrisy. And they did that.

Confession was made before the whole college and united prayer was offered. The next day was set apart for fasting and humiliation and prayer. At the close of which they gathered together with a great heart of thankfulness.

Feeling the moral and spiritual atmosphere was cleansed and that God would be able to give an exhibition of his faithfulness. God honored their faith. And the very next morning came a check for fifty pounds.

Very simple story, but it illustrates what I mean. The whole work of God will be held up. A whole assembly can have its spiritual life injured, limited.

The warfare of the faith can be turned into defeat. Oh, how a lot will result if the Lord has to stand back and say, I'm sorry, I can't go on with this, with that. There's an eight hand, there's an Ananias and a Sapphira.

You know, dear friends, unholiness. You see, in something that was, after all, only a small part of the whole. Two men in a whole college.

Or one man in all its rows. Or two men in the church at the beginning. A man and his wife in the church at the beginning.

Yes, well, well, the majority are all right. A mess. We're not doing this, are we? Nevertheless.

The Holy Spirit focuses right down on that. Because he is bound to the corporate principles. He is committed to the corporate principles.

On the one hand, if one member suffers, all the members suffer. If one member rejoices, all the members rejoice. There is a relatedness which is sacred to the Holy Spirit.

And our blessings, our blessings, benefits the whole church. Our sin, our unholiness may cripple the whole church. Some word I know.

Holiness is militant. It is power of triumphant warfare. Holiness is Christly character.

Holiness is not formal makeup. Nothing put on. Lord Jesus saw right through them.

With scribes, Pharisees, rulers. None of that. No makeup, spiritually, will pass with the Holy Spirit.

Holiness is Christly character. More than teaching. More than profession.

More than pretense. More than formal procedure. On the outward side, it is the very person, the very life, the very character of Christ in the believer and in the church.

Very big matter. Far bigger than this. But that's enough.

The Holy, the Spirit of Holiness. Because He is that, everything else follows. Everything else follows.

Now, for your comfort, let me say this in closing. Those men who were gathered in that upper room, for those ten days and on that particular day, in themselves I don't think were any more holy than they were when one of them denied the Lord Jesus. They had all forsaken Him and fled.

In that way, denied Him. They were all guilty. And I don't think that on the day of Pentecost, in themselves, they were any more holy than they were before.

But the Spirit came upon them, by force, to make them holy. To make them holy. To set up a holiness of life within them.

You haven't got to struggle to get to a place of holiness. Trying to make yourself worthy of the Holy Spirit. You have to be where they were, before the Lord.

Set upon all that the Lord had spoken of. Obedient to what the Lord has said. That is what they were doing.

After He had given them commandment through the Holy Spirit. Now, I don't believe that that relates to the command to go into all the world and preach the gospel. Immediately, the context says, He commanded them that they depart not from Jerusalem.

After He had given commandment by the Holy Spirit, they are obeying His commandment. That is, they are there, open, diligent, committed, earnest, ready. Waiting on Him.

Men of many, many imperfections. But the Holy Spirit saw a way in them. A way in them.

And He came and took that way.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/t-austin-sparks/holy-spirit-church-and-nations-part-3/>

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