

# Holy Spirit 2

by William MacDonald

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*The Holy Spirit convicts the unsaved of sin and convicts the believer of sin, making conviction of sin necessary for salvation.*

**Duration:** 38:27

**Scripture:** Ephesians 5:25

**Topics:** "Holy Spirit"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of receiving the word of God with contrition and tears rather than with superficial joy. He shares a story about a man who read Paul's letter to the Romans and had many questions, but it wasn't until he was born again in faith that he truly understood and trusted in Christ. The speaker highlights the convicting work of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life, urging listeners to watch for tears as a sign of genuine conviction. He then discusses the first ministry of the Holy Spirit, which is to convict the unsaved of sin, referencing John 16:7-11. The speaker reflects on his own experience of the Spirit exposing his inward life and revealing the depth of his sinfulness.

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## Transcript

Let's look to the Lord in prayer. Father, we just come before you as we turn to your word. We pray for the illumination of the Holy Spirit of God.

We thank you that he inspired the scriptures, and we thank you that it is through him that we understand the scriptures. And so we pray that you will open our hearts to receive your word and to obey what we find in it. We ask in Jesus' name.

Amen. First of all, I'd like to review what we went over last night. We were talking about the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

And we mentioned, first of all, his personality. The Holy Spirit is a person. The Holy Spirit is not an influence, not a thing, but a person.

And we mentioned last night that the Spirit of God has intellect, emotions, and will. The Spirit of God has intellect. He's called the Spirit of knowledge and of wisdom.

The Spirit of God has emotions. We mentioned how he can be grieved and how he can be quenched. And the Spirit of God has will.

That's found in many different places in the Bible, but especially in connection with the gifts which he gives. He gives them according to his own will. Then we mentioned that the Spirit of God is God, the deity of the Spirit of God.

He's called God categorically in Acts 5, verses 3 and 4. Ananias and Sapphira didn't lie to man, they lied to God. They lied to the Holy Spirit in the same context. And not only is he called God, but he has the attributes of God.

The Holy Spirit of God is spoken of as omnipotent. He's seen in the work of creation. The Spirit of God is omniscient.

He has all knowledge. And the Spirit of God is omnipresent, Psalm 139. There's nowhere where you can go where the Spirit of God is not, in all places at one and the same time.

In Hebrews 9, verse 14, he's spoken of as the eternal spirit, one of the attributes of God. God is the eternal one. And then, of course, finally, the Spirit of God is sovereign, and that means that he can do what he wishes.

But what he wishes is always fair, just, righteous, good, etc. Now, we just said that the Spirit of God is in all places at one and the same time, and always has been. And yet, the Lord Jesus promised that the Spirit of God would come.

And this raises a problem. How can he come if he's always been here? And we mentioned last night that he came in a very specific way. On the day of Pentecost, he came as the permanent indweller of the believer and of the Church.

He had never come like that before. In other words, although he had always been in the world, there was a special way in which he came at Pentecost. And that had to do, of course, with the formation of the Church, didn't it? Pentecost was the birthday of the Church.

And this is the way in which the Spirit of God will be taken out at the time of the rapture. When we say that the Spirit of God is going to go at the time of the rapture, it doesn't mean that he won't be in the world anymore. He will.

People will get saved through the tribulation period, and it will be by the Spirit of God that they get saved. But he will be taken out as the one who indwells the Church, naturally, because the Church is going to be gone. And he will be taken out as the one who permanently indwells the individual believer, naturally, because the individual believers are going to be gone as well.

And so that's what we've tried to point out here. Then we mentioned some types of the Holy Spirit last night. And we found out that all of these types of the Holy Spirit are fluid, wind, water, fire, oil, cloud.

Hard to hold in your hand, aren't they? Hard for man to control. Can't control some of them at all. And this is very good for us to see because, and I say this reverently, we tend to put the Holy Spirit in a straitjacket.

We tend to say he always has to work in this way all the time. Now, he never will work contrary to the Word of God, that's true. But he is absolutely infinite in the number of different ways in which he can work.

Some people think that because he performed certain miracles in the early days of the Church, he has to perform these same miracles today. He doesn't have to do that. He can do what he wishes.

Just because he raised the dead back there doesn't mean he has to raise the dead here. He's sovereign. He can do what he wishes.

But what he wishes is always best. And then we also mentioned last night that unbelievers can resist the Holy Spirit of God. Acts 7:51. You do always resist the Holy Spirit.

And really, I think any unsaved person today is doing that, isn't he? Maybe there's some unsaved person in our midst today. If so, you're resisting the Holy Spirit. He's trying to woo and win you to Christ, and you're resisting.

And it's so foolish. It's like a flea resisting a furnace, isn't it? Imagine a man pitting his will against the will of God. Ridiculous.

And then we also mentioned that apostates blaspheme against the Holy Spirit. The unpardonable sin found in Matthew 12. And they also insult the Spirit of grace, Hebrews 10.

Verses 28 and 29. That brings us to the ministries of the Holy Spirit. And that's where we want to begin today.

Incidentally, some of you have mentioned that you didn't get all of these down. We go pretty fast. If you didn't get some of these down and want to copy them, please see me afterwards, and I will get them to you.

I mean, I don't have anything that I can give you, but you can copy. The ministries of the Holy Spirit. The first ministry of the Holy Spirit, he convicts the unsaved of sin.

And I just want to slow down a little now. That was by way of review. And now I just want to go over this carefully.

John chapter 16, verses 7 through 11. John chapter 16, verses 7 through 11. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth.

It is expedient 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 has come, he will reprove. Some of the modern versions might have the word convict there. He will convict 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.

Now when we come to verse 8, he will convict the world of sin. We generally understand that to mean the convicting work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a sinner. How he plows us up because of our sin.

And makes us in a hurry to trust Christ. Not exactly what it means. It's the way I'm going to use it today, but it's not really what it means.

In other words, every passage of Scripture has an interpretation, but it has many applications. And first of all, I'd like to explain what I believe the interpretation of this passage of Scripture is. And then I'm going to use it as an application.

But I like to explain that, I don't like to do things without explaining to people what I'm doing. Verses 7 through 11 say this to me. The Holy Spirit shouldn't be in the world today.

Does that shock you? Jesus is in heaven today. He shouldn't be in heaven today, he should be down in the world, reigning on the throne. He came to the world 1900 years ago, and he was rejected.

They said, we will not have this man to reign over us. To crucify them, he was buried, he rose again, he ascended back to heaven. And when he ascended back to heaven and was glorified, the Holy Spirit was sent back into the world as Christ's representative.

The presence of the Holy Spirit in the world today is witness to a rejected Christ. Think of that. It's really true.

The presence of the Holy Spirit today in the work that he does is witness to a rejected Christ. His very presence in the world today condemns the world. That's what this means when it says, Nevertheless I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away.

If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you. But if I depart, I will send him unto you. When he has come, he will condemn the world in respect of sin and of righteousness and of judgment.

Let me say that. The very presence of the Holy Spirit in the world today, doing the work that he's doing today as the vicar of Christ on earth, condemns the world. Why does it condemn the world? Because the Spirit of God here is witness to the fact that the Lord Jesus came and he was rejected and crucified.

In respect of sin. The sin of the world in nailing the Son of God to the cross. The Spirit of God testifies that.

Of righteousness. Of sin, because they believe not on me. See that? Of sin, because they believe not on me.

That's it. Of righteousness, because I go to the Father and ye see me no more. The presence of the Holy Spirit of God in the world today witnesses to the fact that Christ was right.

God took him back to heaven and glorified him at his own right hand. Of judgment, because the Prince of this world is judged. In other words, the devil met his Waterloo at the cross of Calvary.

And the Spirit of God in the world today is witness to that fact. He's still operating on a long leash, I grant that. The devil is still operating, but his doom is assured.

And all of this is testified to by the Spirit of God in the world today. Now read it in that connection. Verse 8, And he, when he is come, will condemn, convict the world in respect of sin and of righteousness and of judgment.

Of sin, because they believe not on me. Of righteousness, because I go to the Father and ye shall see me no more. Of judgment, because the Prince of this world is judged.

I believe that's the interpretation of this passage. But I'm going to use it in a different way today. And that is that the Spirit of God also comes and convicts the individual sinner of this.

Of the sin of not believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. He that believeth not is condemned already. Let me just say that apart from conviction of sin, there's no conversion.

Apart from conviction of sin, there's no salvation. What do we mean when we speak about conviction of sin? We speak about that ministry of the Holy Spirit where he starts to work in a person's life. Shows him that he's sinful, ungodly, at enmity with the Lord, helpless, hopeless, deserving of nothing better than hell.

That's the convicting work of the Spirit of God. I think it's good to just pause here and remind ourselves that the Spirit of God works in a man's life long before he's saved, doesn't he? People have trouble with that expression in Hebrews chapter 6. And we're made partakers of the Holy Spirit. Unsaved people made partakers of the Holy Spirit.

Absolutely. Absolutely. Unsaved people made partakers of the Holy Spirit.

What? In his convicting ministry. Even in matters like this it says the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife. Else were your children unclean but now are they holy.

An unbeliever can be sanctified? Yes. An unbeliever can be sanctified. What does that mean? It means he's set apart in a position of external privilege before God.

That's what it means. It means a great privilege for an unsaved husband to have a believing wife who bows the knee and prays for him. He's sanctified.

Does that assure his salvation? By no means. But he's sanctified. So the Spirit of God works in our lives long before we're saved.

And he convicts us of sin. Did you know conviction of sin before you were saved? Did you know the Spirit of God plowing you up? Showing you that if you died it would be an eternal hell? Well I'd like to suggest to you if you never knew that you've never been genuinely saved. I was brought up in a Christian home.

I can't remember a time in my life when I didn't believe that Jesus was God. That he died on the cross for our sins. That he was buried.

That he rose again. In fact the whole thing I believe. I used to tell kids in the neighborhood how to be saved.

And I wasn't saved myself. And I had a strict Presbyterian mother who made us really walk the straight and narrow. I'm telling you, we really lived separated lives.

In our unsaved days we lived more separated lives than most priests do today. My mother ruled us with a rod of iron. We never went to the theater.

All the rest of the kids in the neighborhood Saturday afternoon brushing off the things. Not the McDonald kids. The oddballs of the neighborhood weren't allowed to go to the show.

We never even bought things in the store on Sunday. Sunday was the Lord's day. And if you loved the Lord you loved his day too.

This was the reasoning. How does somebody like that get convicted of sin? Never danced. Never smoked.

Never swore. Never went to a show. How did he get convicted of sin? Never committed adultery, murder, any of the grosser sins? I want to tell you something.

When I was about 18 years of age the Spirit of God began to work in my life. And he exposed my life to me. He exposed my inward life to me.

And he showed me that what I am is a lot worse than anything I've ever done. Think about that for a minute. And I say this for the benefit of some young people brought up in Christian homes.

What you are inside is a lot worse than anything you've ever done. You don't believe it. Think of your thought life this last week.

And the Spirit of God got a hold of me and convicted me of that. And I'd lie in my pillow at night. A person like that can't go to heaven.

I never felt this before. But I felt it then. Wow.

I can remember going into a Baptist church one time for a gospel crusade. And I was up in the balcony. It's still so real to me.

I had to get up and get out. Afraid the place was going to fall in on me and I'd be perishing forever. And I had to get out to the fresh air.

What was it? The convicting power of the Holy Spirit of God in my life. Not very comfortable, but very necessary. Now.

We can't say that everybody must have the same degree of conviction of sin. You can't say that. Some of the old preachers that, you know, were saved from the gutter most to the uttermost.

And they would really create the impression that if you weren't convicted as deeply as they were, then you weren't saved at all. Well, you can't say that. There are different degrees of conviction of sin, but everybody must have it in order to be saved.

And this is one of the curses of modern evangelism. That people are pressured into a profession of faith in Christ when they've never really been deeply convicted of sin. Think about that.

We have our neat formulas for salvation. Yes, you believe this? Yes. You believe this? Yes.

You believe this? Nothing. You're saved. Nonsense.

Saved. You mean just an intellectual ascent to certain facts where there has been no convicting work by the Holy Spirit of God? You're not saved at all. Did you know that nobody in the Book of Acts was ever told to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ except convicted sinners? I hope you don't think I'm a real radical, but I think it would be ridiculous to go into Freiburg today and walk down the street and walk up to a man and say, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and I'll help you be saved.

It's ridiculous. He'd say, Saved? I don't even know I'm lost. He'd probably say something like that.

And he's right, too. What does he want to be saved for? He doesn't know he's lost. I'm going to tell you, when the Holy Spirit gets you where he wants you, there's only one thing you can do.

Reach out in faith to Jesus. It's the only thing you can do. Simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we have an awful lot of evangelism going on today, but a lot of it is ill-founded. We don't let the Spirit of God have his perfect work, and we pick fruit before it's ripe. But I want to tell you, the more thorough the work of conviction of sin, the better the salvation that follows.

That might not be theologically quite the way to say it, but I think you know what I mean. To whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much. Think about it.

Conviction of sin. This is one of the great ministries of the Holy Spirit of God, convicting the sinner of sin. To the point where he not only knows he's not good enough for heaven, but he feels he's not good enough for hell.

I'll tell you, if you give me a person like that, who's desperate about his soul, it's an easy thing to lead a person like that to the Lord. In one of the parables in Matthew 13, the parable of the four soils, it speaks about the man who received the word with joy. I should have just checked this before I started, but in one of those parables, the interpretation of the parable, the four soils, it says he received the word with joy.

Where is that? Oh, yes, verse 20, Matthew 13, 20. It says, but he that received the seed into stony places, the same as he that heareth the word and straightway with joy receiveth it. You say, oh, wonderful.

Not wonderful at all. There was nothing there at all. It's not a good way to receive the word with joy when you're a sinner.

Better to receive it with tears, better to receive it with contrition, better to receive it with brokenness. He didn't last. You say, how do you know? Well, read on.

With joy receiveth it, yet hath he not root in himself, but endureth for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, straightway he stumbles. Doesn't last. Have you ever been to a gospel crusade, a popular gospel crusade, and the invitation is given, and you see people jauntily going down the aisle, chewing gum and laughing to receive Jesus? Nothing there.

There's absolutely nothing there. They're receiving it with joy. But I'll tell you, some trouble comes in life, and pretty soon they abandon it all.

So I think this is an encouragement to us in dealing with souls. Don't pressure them. Don't push them into a profession of faith.

Don't be afraid to tell them, look, go home and read the gospel of John. And before you read it, pray and say, oh God, if this is your word, and if I'm a sinner, if I need a Savior, and Jesus is the Savior, show it to me as I read the gospel of John. And it works.

It works. I've often told about a friend of mine at MIT years ago, Harry Dixon, and he had an unsaved roommate. And the roommate was quibbling about the Bible.

He used to come to Harry with alleged difficulties and contradictions in the Bible, and Harry would patiently answer them. But Harry got a bit fed up after a while, and one day he said to his roommate, look, have you read the Bible? And he said, well, no, I haven't. He said, well, look, don't come to me with any more difficulties or alleged discrepancies in the Bible until you've had the intestinal fortitude to read Paul's letter to the Romans.

But the guy accepted the challenge. He read Paul's letter to the Romans. He got some answers to his questions, but he got a lot more questions.

So he read it again. And again, he got some more questions, and he got some more answers. And he never did come back to Harry until he was born again to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

A solid case. Why? Because Harry didn't rush him. Harry didn't pick the fruit before it was ripe.

Harry let the Spirit of God do his convicting work in the life of that fellow. When he trusted Christ, he knew what he was trusting. He had a doctrinal foundation for what he was doing.

So I'd like to emphasize that to you this morning, the convicting work of the Spirit of God in the believer's life. Watch for that. Watch for tears.

One of the old preachers used to say, I like to see a wet birth. And I knew just what he meant. A wet birth.

Good to see. And yet I don't want to create the impression that you have to have had the same extent of conviction that I had. I don't think it's right.

There are different degrees of conviction, but there has to be conviction if there's going to be conversion. A second ministry of the Holy Spirit is, and this is as far as we'll get today, he regenerates. He regenerates.

He regenerates. John chapter 3, very familiar passage of scripture. John chapter 3 and verse 5, Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

John chapter 3, verse 5. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again. And then Titus chapter 3, verse 5. Titus chapter 3, verse 5. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, notice, and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that being justified by his grace we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Regeneration, the new birth, is a work of the Holy Spirit of God. He first of all convicts us of our sins, that he points us to the Lord Jesus, and when we trust the sinner's Savior, he regenerates us. Very important to see.

Now what does that mean, except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Well, you know, there are different interpretations of this, I'm going to give you some and then tell you the one that I prefer. Some people believe that that expression, born of water, refers to our natural birth, and the Spirit refers to the new birth.

Two births. Except a man be born of water, that's the natural birth, there is water in connection with the natural birth. And of the Spirit, that's the new birth.

Do you like that explanation? I don't. Glad to see Milo shaking his head. I don't like that explanation.

It's kind of unnecessary to say he has to be born the first time, doesn't it? You know, he's talking about it. He didn't have a natural birth. I don't think it means that.

Some people believe it means baptism, born of water and the Spirit. Do you like that one? I'll tell you, whatever it means, it doesn't mean baptism. If it did, it would make baptism, not Jesus, the Savior.

To add baptism to salvation denies the finished work of Christ, doesn't it? What he did on the cross was not sufficient. Now you have to add baptism to it. It's a strange thing that if baptism was necessary for salvation, that Jesus didn't baptize anyone.

That's strange. Yet it specifically says that. Jesus didn't baptize, but his disciples.

If baptism were necessary for salvation, it's a strange thing that Paul rejoiced that he had baptized so few of them. It doesn't add up, does it? Certainly the thief on the cross wasn't baptized, and yet Jesus said to him, Today thou shalt be with me in paradise. In Acts chapter 10, Cornelius and his household believed they received the Holy Spirit, and then they were baptized after they were saved.

They believed they received the Holy Spirit because they were saved. And then after that they were baptized as a testimony of their salvation. Baptism is always linked to death in the scriptures.

Did you notice that? Not with the origin of life. Baptism is always buried with him by baptism into death. Romans chapter 6. But I think the great point here is that there are 150 verses in the New Testament that say that salvation is by faith.

And even two or three that seem to indicate baptism can't contradict 150 verses. And add to that the fact that it doesn't work. A lot of people have been baptized by water, but it just doesn't produce salvation.

Some people think that water here refers to the word of God. And it might. That's possible.

Because in Ephesians 5, 25 and 26, you have that simile. Ephesians 5, 25 and 26. Let's just turn to that.

It says, Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word. Their water is linked with the word of God. And 1 Peter chapter 1, 23, which is really quite strong in this direction.

1 Peter chapter 1, verse 23. It says, Seeing ye have... No. Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.

In other words, the word of God is linked there with born again. And it is true. Nobody is saved apart from the word of God.

If it weren't for the word of God, you wouldn't even know about the plan of salvation. But I really believe that in John 3, 5, water refers to the spirit of God. And in that verse, the word and in that verse can be translated even.

Same word that is translated and in some places can also be translated even. So I believe what it really means is, except a man be born of water, even the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. I don't discount the word of God there.

It could mean that. Maybe when we get to heaven, we'll find it means that. But in the meantime, I think water refers.

What? Well, let's ask John. John, when you use the word water, what do you mean? And he'll say, well, turn over to John 7, 38 and 39. John 7, verses 38 and 39.

He that believeth in me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the spirit, the spirit, water, this spake he of the spirit. In other words, in John's gospel, water seems to refer primarily to the Holy Spirit.

So the verse can mean. Except a man be born of water, even the spirit. And, you know, it goes on to emphasize that verse six, that which is born of the spirit is spirit.

The whole emphasis in the passage seems to be it's a spiritual birth. It's a birth by the Holy Spirit of God. Now, I think we're just going to stop there because our time is up.

I was told to go to this time, so I hope you're not fretful about it. But we'll go on with further ministries of the Holy Spirit next time. If anybody wants to see the prior outlines, just let me know.

Let's pray. Father, we do thank you for your wonderful word. We thank you for the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Those of us who have been saved by the grace of God, who've known that convicting power in our lives and the regenerating power as well. Help us always, Lord, to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called. And Lord, if there should be those in our meeting who are not sure, who might have a false profession, who might lack assurance of salvation, or truly need to rededicate their lives to you, we just pray that this might be a time when we do business with God in great waters.

We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

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