

War of the Spirit

We have been considering the theology of God, the Father, and God, the Son so, today we are moving on to the theology of God, the Holy Spirit. We very often think of the Father and the Son especially because of how we pray to the Father in the name of the Son, but we don't refer to the Holy Spirit in such a direct way. We talk *to* the Father or Son, but we only talk *about* the Spirit. The Father is worshiped for His love sending His Son into the world to save sinners, His sovereign will in the plan of redemption, and His holiness and righteousness. The Son is worshiped for His love, His willing sacrifice on the cross for our redemption, and His ongoing intercession for believers.

One of the first reactions that we might have to this is that we should somehow worship the Spirit. After all, if He *is* God, just as Jesus is God and the Father is God, then shouldn't we be giving Him equal time in our worship? Shouldn't we feel pressed to give attendance to the Holy Spirit in the same way that I tell you to not neglect the Father and the Son?

While the Holy Spirit is *fully* God, co-equal with the Father and the Son, Scripture does not depict Him as the direct object of worship in the same manner. Worshiping the Father and Son is done *in* and *through* the Spirit, but He Himself does not seek worship apart from directing it to Christ. In later messages we will look at how the Spirit *enables* our worship, *illuminates* the truth of God's Word, and *sanctifies* us in our walk with Christ, making Him essential in our relationship with God even though He is not the focus of direct worship. Today, we will be considering the spiritual struggle we have with the Holy Spirit as He ministers to us in the war between us and Spirit.

1. The overall mission of the Spirit -

I have been to meetings where people begin to beg, plead, and pray to the Holy Spirit and where the emphasis in

preaching is on our loving friend the Holy Spirit. There actually are aspects of this that are warranted, but if we are not careful we can slip into an emphasis on the Spirit that is inappropriate. God does not turn revival on and off at our direction. We might pray for revival to prepare our hearts to receive it, but we cannot force God's hand as if we were handing a petition of a million signatures to a politician in Washington, D.C. Another problem that people have is trying to get an experience of exhilaration.

The focus of worship should not be on the Spirit because the objective of the Holy Spirit is to turn *us* to Jesus Christ. The objective of our walk is to then turn *others* to Jesus Christ, the one that the Holy Spirit is trying to turn *us* to.

John 16:13-15 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for **he shall not speak of himself**; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

14 **He shall glorify me:** for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew *it* unto you.

15 All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that **he shall take of mine, and shall shew *it* unto you.**

Now having said that our attention is not to be focused on the Holy Spirit, we need to understand about the first work of the Spirit in our lives. We need to do this because there is a danger in not heeding the *prompting* of the Spirit. We run the risk of not taking God seriously and missing His will for our lives because it is by the Holy Spirit of God that we make the connection *with* God.

There is a war for your heart that is going on and it is waged by the Spirit of God and the devil.

Acts 5:3 But Peter said, Ananias, **why hath Satan filled thine heart** to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back *part* of the price

of the land?

John 16:1-7 These things have I spoken unto you, **that ye should not be offended.**

2 They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, **the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.**

3 And these things will they do unto you, **because they have not known the Father, nor me.**

4 But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.

5 But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou?

6 But because I have said these things unto you, **sorrow hath filled your heart.**

7 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.**

2. The conviction of the Spirit -

In our natural spiritual state, we resist God and focus on ourselves. If it were not for the Spirit of God, our *natural* inclinations would lead us only to sin.

Rom 3:10-18 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

13 Their throat *is* an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps *is* under their lips:

14 Whose mouth *is* full of cursing

and bitterness:

15 Their feet *are* swift to shed blood:

16 Destruction and misery *are* in their ways:

17 And the way of peace have they not known:

18 There is no fear of God before their eyes.

If it weren't for the conviction of the Holy Spirit, the direction of our conscience would lead us to destruction in Hell just as those destroyed in the Flood.

Gen 6:5 And GOD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.

When the Spirit battles with us, He brings conviction to us.

John 16:7-11 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.

8 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

9 Of sin, because they believe not on me;

10 Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;

11 Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

When we came to salvation, it was because of the Holy Spirit that we faced the fact that we were sinners and needed to be reconciled with God. Church was something that we could take or leave, but mostly leave it. We came to the point where we realized our rebellion against the Spirit and then we saw true righteousness and knew that there was a judgment coming. Before the work of the Spirit, we knew *about* the judgment

because we could read about it. Because of the Spirit's convicting work we knew that we, ourselves, *deserved* that judgment along with the devil, the prince of *this* world.

3. Grieving the Spirit -

Our understanding of being a sinner and deserving judgment comes from the Spirit...but only if we are honest with ourselves. Instead, many people build up defenses against the Spirit. People try to enter into an agreement with God, "I'll leave you alone if you leave me alone." That agreement will never stand. The work of the Holy Spirit will not abide by that.

Isa 28:17-20 Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.

18 And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and **your agreement with hell shall not stand**; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it.

19 From the time that it goeth forth it shall take you: for morning by morning shall it pass over, by day and by night: and **it shall be a vexation** only to understand the report.

20 For **the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it**: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself *in it*.

Rom 3:23 For all have sinned, **and come short** of the glory of God;

We have a responsibility to respond to the Spirit of God.

Heb 3:12-13 **Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief**, in departing from the living God.

13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Eph 4:30-32 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

The one sin that cannot be forgiven is the sin of rejecting the conviction of the Spirit because it is the Spirit that leads you to the forgiveness of *being* a sinner.

Mark 3:28-29 Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme:

29 But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation:

If you reject the conviction of the Spirit, God *will* leave you alone. It will seem like you have won in that war. You don't want to *win* against God because that means you will have lost everything!

Matt 16:26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Prov 1:22-31 How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?

23 Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.

24 Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;
25 But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof:
26 I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh;
27 When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you.
28 Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me:
29 For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD:
30 They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof.
31 Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.

If I preach to someone and he rejects the message of the Gospel, I don't get upset about winning or losing the argument. Instead, I *pity* that person who doesn't care that he is about to lose all of eternity with God but is going to win an eternity in Hell instead.

The war of the Spirit is ultimately against our flesh.

Gal 5:16-17 *This* I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

Rom 7:22-25 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

24 O wretched man that I am!
who shall deliver me from the
body of this death?

25 I thank God through Jesus
Christ our Lord. So then with the
mind I myself serve the law of
God; but with the flesh the law of
sin.

4. The victory of the Spirit -

Instead of losing all by winning
against the Spirit, we can win all by
surrendering to the Spirit. It is by the
Spirit that we receive all understanding
of God. This is what Jesus explained to
Nicodemus.

John 3:1-10 There was a man of
the Pharisees, named Nicodemus,
a ruler of the Jews:

2 The same came to Jesus by
night, and said unto him, Rabbi,
we know that thou art a teacher
come from God: for no man can
do these miracles that thou doest,
except God be with him.
**[Nicodemus actually didn't
know how to ask the question,
so Jesus helped him out]**

3 Jesus answered and said unto
him, Verily, verily, I say unto
thee, Except a man be born
again, he cannot see the kingdom
of God.

4 Nicodemus saith unto him,
How can a man be born when he
is old? can he enter the second
time into his mother's womb, and
be born?

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.

6 That which is born of the flesh
is flesh; and that which is born of
the Spirit is spirit.

7 Marvel not that I said unto thee,
Ye must be born again.

8 The wind bloweth where it
listeth, and thou hearest the
sound thereof, but canst not tell
whence it cometh, and whither it

goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

9 Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?

10 Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?

The way to righteousness was through the Holy Spirit.

John 16:12-15 I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew *it* unto you.

15 All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew *it* unto you.

1Cor 12:3 Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and ***that*** **no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.**

When you read the Bible, your understanding will come by the work of the Holy Spirit. You will see your life and purpose in a different way. You will look at the world in a different way. Most importantly, you will understand God as God wants to be understood. One of the things we can be very conscious of as we share spiritual principles in God's Word are the excuses people make as they resist the Spirit. You can tell them about the blessings of tithing, but people explain how they can't afford it. You can talk about baptism and watch people try to put it off. You can explain about serving God *in a committed, responsible,*

reliable, and real way but people explain how busy they are. You can talk about the worldly singers with their worldly and sensual songs but people will excuse it all just because their *flesh likes* it. You can talk to people about the toxicity of mind altering drugs but, I don't know if it is just because of the influence of the drugs or not, they can't see how they are affected. You can offer all kinds of wisdom from the Bible only to be told, "I'm okay" while they are setting themselves for disaster in the future.

As we urge you to turn to Christ, be honest with the Spirit because you know He is right. It is simple a matter of flipping the switch from "I won't" to "I know I'm wrong, I will give in to the Spirit and turn to Christ."

If you a child of God, is there something you are struggling with where you know you are dead wrong and obstinate? You can flip the switch from "I won't" to "I will." Let the Holy Spirit win the battle for your heart! You might say, "How can I do that?" Instead of spending time on the pursuit of your fleshly comfort, get involved in the service of the Lord. As you share the Gospel, you will not feel a tingle in your flesh, but a tingle in your spirit as the Holy Spirit opens the understanding of the Scripture so you can share it. As you engage with younger believers, the Holy Spirit will use the lessons you have learned to pass them on. As you study, the Holy Spirit will open up the Word to you so you can bless others.

1. The overall mission of the Spirit - John 16:13-15, Acts 5:3, John 16:1-7
2. The conviction of the Spirit - Rom 3:10-18, Gen 6:5, John 16:7-11
3. Grieving the Spirit Isa 28:17-20, Rom 3:23, Heb 3:12-13 , Eph 4:30-32, Mark 3:28-29, Matt 16:26, Prov 1:22-31, Gal 5:16-17 , Rom 7:22-25
4. The victory of the Spirit - John 3:1-10, 16:12-15, 1Cor 12:3