

The Fullness of the Holy Spirit for Life and Work - 9

"I say the truth...my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit.." Romans 9.1

Review:

Session 1: On the inside, each of us has become a dwelling place of the Spirit.

Session 2: Distinguishing the functioning difference of body, soul and spirit

Session 3: Led by the Spirit: knowing the character and tone of voice and activity of the Spirit

Session 4: The Temple of the Holy Spirit

Session 5: The 'newness' of the Spirit [as against the 'oldness' of the letter]

Session 6: The Spirit given to the obedient

Session 7: Praying in the Spirit...

Session 8: "Be filled with the Spirit"...speaking, singing, chanting, giving thanks, being subject on to another

1. The holiness of God.

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The highest glory that God has is relationally expressed in the Trinitarian life. It is in the exclusive, total and permanent way the Persons of the Trinity relate to each other within their shared Life. This holiness is the source of all God's hatred of sin and is the power of his destruction of it. It is also the foundation of God's intensity to love what is good and to do it consistently.

In the ensuing mess of the fall of man from his obedience to God, conscience is the guardian of God's honour.

2. The Spirit of Holiness [Romans 1.1-5].

This is the Name for the Spirit of God in the Old Testament. It associates the Spirit's person and work with the exclusive separation that each Person has for the other in the inner relations of God 's trinitarian life.

It is according to the Spirit's own Person that the Father raised the Son out from among the dead. It was a power-declaration of Jesus as being the Son of God; it vindicated Him as good and holy in the sight of the world which had judged Him, condemned Him and crucified Him as a malefactor. The resurrection of Jesus was his justification before the whole world - done by the Father according to the Spirit of holiness.

3. The Spirit associated with the declaration of what is holy and true.

The very first experience of salvation that a human has concerns a re-adjustment of his conscience from the impact of law and its judgment and condemnation to the conviction of the Spirit where we live by an awareness of assurance, joy or we know the instant grief of knowing when we are living in a way that is not pleasing to God..

All through the history of the Jewish people, there was an appreciation of their sin as it found its condemnation through the holy Law of God. In this way, the Law was an objective, written distinct standard that was available to the Jews, but in the way they found it impacted upon their life it caused them to know the judgment of God and the condemnation of law - the consequent liability to penalty. This has the effect of putting a relational distance between the people and their God, for they inevitably came to focus on the written code as a way to relate to God. This regime of the law, through the deceitfulness of sin and its power, came to be a regime of death to them.

The gospel of grace that comes through Jesus Christ has brought us a regime that open life to us. As the preaching of the grace of God found for us in Jesus comes to our ears, faith in God means that we are drawn to trust his Word about how, in the light of the redemptive work of Christ, He is not counting our sins against us.

The gospel message - of which the content is Jesus - assures us that at great cost to Himself God's love has been demonstrated through his judgement of sin for what it is, and his hatred of it has been declared before the whole world through Christ's death for us, and his resurrection from the dead.

So the first move of the Holy Spirit within the world is to convict us of our sin of unbelief, of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and the judgment of Satan. [John 14 and 16].

[1] Through the conscience the work of the Spirit, the light of God's holy Law shines into the heart. Both the Law and the Gospel with their call to repentance and their conviction of sin appeal to the conscience. It is not until conscience has said "amen" to the charge of transgression and unbelief that the deliverance can truly come experientially.

[2] Through conscience the Holy Spirit causes the light of mercy to shine into our stained life, so that we may be washed. The "blood of Jesus cleanses our conscience" [Hebrews 9.14; 10.2,22].

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The aim of that blood of Christ is to reach our conscience, to silence its accusations, and cleanse it, until it testifies to us that "every stain is removed and the love of the Father is entering our soul. We then have a heart sprinkled clean from an evil conscience. Having no more consciousness of sin is the privilege of every believer. This arises from the conscience saying amen to God's message of the power of Jesus' blood - which re-echoes the recognition of God Himself about the sufficiency of that blood to atone in a way that God considers the work done and done rightly and in a holy way.

[3] The conscience that has been cleansed must be kept that way as we walk in obedience of faith, with the light of God's favour shining upon it.

To the indwelling Spirit, and His work to lead us in all God's will, conscience must also say "amen". This commits us to walk humbly, tenderly and watching all the time lest conscience should register that we have not done what we knew to be right, and also what was not of faith [Romans 14.23]. Consider 2 Corinthians 1.12, Acts 23.1,24.16, 2 Tim 1.3; 1 John 3.21-22.

[4] The men of faith in the Old Testament had the testimony that they had pleased God [Hebrews 11.4,5,6,39]. For us, it is not only a command to be obeyed, but is also a grace worked by God [Colossians 1.10-11; 2 Thess 2.11; 4.1; Heb 12.28, 13.21].

4. Conscience is the seat of faith.

Weakness in our faith owes a lot to the want of a clean conscience. Paul closely connects the two of them [1 Timothy 1.5,19].

[a] Deal with particular sin - it will always be direct and clear. Give conscience time to reprove and convict. Do this in submission to God in humility.

[b] Indicate to the Father your decision to obey Him on this matter.

[c] Trust Him, through the Holy Spirit to empower you to do so. Even if you are that you are weak and helpless.

[d] Vow to Him that you will always strive to have a conscience void of offence toward God and man.

Then proceed to other sins, one by one.

Your courage will grow that you can walk this way.

5. Faithfulness to conscience is the first step in the path of restored holiness

[1] Intense conscientiousness is the ground work and characteristic of true spirituality. It is the work of our conscience to witness to our being right towards our sense of duty and towards God. The work of the Spirit is to witness to God's acceptance of our faith in Christ and our obedience to Him. In this way the testimony of the Spirit and of our conscience will, as our life progresses, become increasingly identical. [1 Cor 8]. The growth of the conscience proceeds in step with our faith as it takes into account the truth of God and we align ourselves to live by that truth. This is the point of the process that Paul is discussing in 1 Corinthians 8 and 11.

[2] The obverse is also true. Sin that is not forsaken leaves a stain upon the conscience and it becomes defiled [Titus 1.15]. This can lead to a place where the Christian can sin on undisturbed; with a conscience largely blinded and unfeeling.

Father of all our joy; thank You for the voice that You have given in our heart whether we are pleasing to You or not.

Thank You that You gave the blood of your dear Son to cleanse our conscience from dead works; and that we may look up to You in full assurance with a heart cleansed from an evil conscience.

Thank You for the power of the Holy Spirit to bring this witness every moment.

We want to walk before You today with the awareness that there is nothing grieving Your Spirit or the Lord Jesus.

Deliver us from those areas of life where power of sin blinds us and makes our service of You ineffective.

We want the joy of the joint witness of conscience and Your Spirit that we are well pleasing to You.

Amen.