

The Work of the Holy Spirit



SABBATH—MARCH 18

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: John 16:8–11; Romans 5:10; Hebrews 4:15, 16; 1 Peter 5:8, 9; 1 John 5:12, 13; Psalm 31:24.

MEMORY VERSE: “May the God who gives hope fill you with great joy. May you have perfect peace as you trust in him. May the power of the Holy Spirit fill you with hope” (Romans 15:13, NIV).

WE NOW COME TO THE END of our study this quarter on the Holy Spirit and living a spiritual life. We will look at one other important work of the Spirit in this last lesson. It is a work that has not yet received our attention.

Jesus told the disciples that He would go to the Father. And He promised to send them the Holy Spirit: “ ‘But the Father will send the Friend in my name to help you. The Friend is the Holy Spirit. He will teach you all things. He will remind you of everything I have said to you’ ” (John 14:26, NIV).

Jesus said that the Holy Spirit is a *parakletos*, that is, a “helper,” “comforter,” or a “go-between.” In other words, He works in our behalf. At the same time, Jesus also announced the work that this Go-Between would do. The Spirit “ ‘will prove that the world’s people are guilty. He will prove their guilt concerning sin and godliness [holiness] and judgment’ ” (John 16:8, NIV).

During our final week, we will study in more detail this special work of the Holy Spirit. We will learn how His work relates to the hope we have that our salvation is certain. We will learn how this work relates to the hope of the Second Coming.

PROOF OF SIN (John 16:8, 9)

Read John 16:8, 9. In these verses, what special work does the Holy Spirit do for us? Why is this work so important?



We must not go around pointing out the sin in the lives of other people.

Jesus has called the Holy Spirit the *paraclete*. This word is rich in meaning. It suggests the idea of Helper, Go-Between, and Comforter.

A comforter is wonderful to have. But a comforter also must be a helper. It is very sad to say, but many Christians often have an accusing spirit instead of a helping one. We must not go around pointing out the sin in the lives of other people. That is not something that Jesus has called us to do. After all, who are we to point out sin in others? We are sinners ourselves.

Read Romans 2:1 and Matthew 7:3. What message must we take from these verses?

We are God's witnesses. We are not meant to judge others. We are called upon to tell others about how Jesus has saved us. We are not to condemn (call guilty) others for their wrongs. Pointing out the sins of others is the work of the Holy Spirit.

It is the Comforter—not us—who shall “ ‘prove that the world's people are guilty’ ” (John 16:8, NIV). He will show them their sin. This is because people who have not given their lives to Jesus often do not know what sin truly is. They do not know just how destructive it can be.

These verses do not teach that the Spirit will list particular sins. Instead, He will go to the sin that is at the heart of all sin: that sin is unbelief in Jesus Christ (John 16:9). We may wonder what causes our deepest unhappiness and feelings of loneliness. The cause is not our own imperfect characters (thoughts; feelings; actions). Instead, the cause is our refusal to accept the Holy Spirit. God sent Him to rescue us from our sad and lonely condition (state).

So, the main problem of all sin is that we do not believe in Jesus. Jesus is the only One, however, who can save us from our sin and guilt. So, we must not reject Him or His Spirit. Rejecting Jesus and His Spirit is a sin. This sin puts self at the center of things. It refuses to believe the Word of God (the Bible). Only the Holy Spirit can open our hearts and minds to our great need to turn away from sin. Only He can lead us to accept the salvation that is found through Christ's death in our behalf.

THE NEED TO BE HOLY (Romans 5:10)

John 16:8 says that the Holy Spirit will “ ‘prove that the world’s people are guilty’ ” (NirV). He also will show that they do not know what being holy means. That is because the world does not know what sin really is. So, they will not know what true holiness is either.

People who have not given their lives to Christ believe that their own goodness and good works will be enough to save them. They do not want God’s holiness. Instead, they want a goodness that comes from their own outward acts. For example, they want to be saved by obeying the law of God. But obeying the law can never make us clean in God’s eyes.

In Isaiah 64:6, the prophet (special messenger) Isaiah talks about all the human works of goodness done by the people of his day. He says all their goodness is “dirty rags” (NirV). In other words, even our best acts are not good enough to save us.

But the holiness of Jesus is good enough to save us. It satisfies all the claims of the law of God. It counts with God the Father. And we can claim it for ourselves through faith in Jesus Christ alone.

Read Romans 5:10 and Hebrews 4:15, 16. How is the holiness that Christ gives us related to the work that He does for us before the Father in heaven?

The law demands holiness. Jesus’ perfect life satisfies this demand. He died in our behalf. He was put to death here on earth. So, the ones who put Him to death rejected Him. But the Father in heaven welcomed Jesus. God brought Jesus back to life from the dead. And by bringing Him to life, God put His approval upon Jesus’ life. This means that God showed that He accepted the work Jesus did to save us. Now Jesus is our Go-Between with the Father (Hebrews 4:15, 16). He put His holy life in place of our “dirty rags.” And He did that because our works are not good enough to save us.

So, we can live because Jesus lives in us.

God the Father gave glory to Jesus. He showed that Jesus’ death is good enough to save us. The gift of the Spirit, then, is proof that Jesus’ name has been cleared of any false charges that Satan has made.

Have you experienced just how “dirty” your own acts of goodness are? What does this teach you about your need for Christ’s holiness instead?



All our goodness is “dirty rags.”

SATAN WAS JUDGED AT THE CROSS (John 16:8, 11)

Read John 16:8, 11. What judgment is Jesus referring to in these verses? Why is this judgment good news?

Jesus talks about the judgment in John 12:48. He makes it clear that the judgment is very real. But that future judgment is not what Jesus is talking about in John 16:11. Indeed, the wording shows clearly that the Lord is not talking about future judgment. Instead, the part of the judgment that Jesus talks about here is the good news that Satan already has been judged at the cross. The devil is the great enemy of truth. He is now living on borrowed time. Judgment will come. But this verse teaches us that “the prince of this world” (Satan) now already stands condemned (John 12:31, NIV).

Read 1 Peter 5:8, 9. How does Peter describe Satan in these verses? How can we resist or hold out against him?

The devil knows that his time is short. He knows that he has been defeated at Calvary. But he is still alive. And he is furious. He wants to destroy as many people as he can. But he is a defeated enemy. Jesus has won the victory. This is because the blood of Jesus makes us free.

Here is an example from history. It can give us an idea of how hard the devil fights to destroy us. The Allied forces invaded France on June 6, 1944. It was clear that Hitler would lose the war. But the Nazis fought against the Allied forces for the next 11 months until the war ended. And these 11 months were the bloodiest of all. In the same way, Satan knows that he was completely defeated at the cross. But he will not give up. He still fights and tries to destroy as many people as he can.

We live in difficult times. Peter tells us to be concerned about the threat to our spiritual lives. In other words, we need to be wide awake. But we can lay all our fears and worries on Jesus. He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7, 8).

Why is judgment good news? Who gives us confidence in the judgment? How can we preach about the judgment in such a way that we fill others with hope instead of fear?



The good news is the prince of this world already has been judged at the cross.

BELONGING TO CHRIST (1 John 5:12, 13)

Read 1 John 5:12, 13; Romans 8:15–17; and 2 Corinthians 5:5. The Bible says that first we must accept Christ as our Savior. Then we can trust that we have the promise of eternal life. According to these verses, why can we trust this promise?

The Holy Spirit is the One who leads sinners to Jesus. This is because Jesus died on the cross in our place. His death brought us back to God. And Jesus' forgiveness sets us free. Now we are free to live new lives. God adopts us as His children. And, finally, we are no longer God's enemies (Romans 5:10). Instead, the Holy Spirit controls the way we live (Romans 8:4). His control helps us to "think about what the Spirit wants" (Romans 8:5, NIV). We are no longer ruled by the power of sin. Instead, the Holy Spirit rules our lives. The Spirit of God now lives in us. And we belong to Christ (Romans 8:9).

As God's children, we will receive all God has for us. The Spirit tells us that we will share what Jesus receives (Romans 8:17). The Spirit raised Jesus from the dead. And now the Spirit gives us life (Romans 8:10). The Spirit helps us to know in our hearts that we truly belong to God (Ephesians 1:13). "The Spirit marks us as God's own. We can now be sure that someday we will receive all that God has promised" (Ephesians 1:14, NIV). Every believer may have this trust and faith (1 John 5:12, 13).

Read Ephesians 1:13, 14. In these verses, what does it mean to be marked by the Spirit?

Those who accept Christ are born again. When we do this, we are born "of the Spirit" (John 3:5). This is because the Holy Spirit puts this truth in our hearts. He marks us so that we can trust that we are saved. Then we can experience the joy that comes from being a child of God.

The Holy Spirit also marks us as belonging to Christ:

"Talk courage. Talk faith and hope. Then you will be all light in the Lord. Keep thinking of the open door that Christ has set before you. No man can shut this door. God will close the door to all evil. But you must give Him a chance to close it. The enemy will come in like a flood. But the Spirit of the Lord will lift up for you a defense against him."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, April 16, 1889.



God will close the door to all evil. But you must give Him the chance to do it.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND HOPE (1 Corinthians 13:13)

Read Romans 5:4, 5; Romans 15:13; and 1 Corinthians 13:13. In these verses, how are love and hope related to each other? What part does the Holy Spirit have in giving us love and hope?

The Holy Spirit is the One who pours out the love of God on our hearts. He connects us to God. He makes God's love live in us. And God's love is unchanging and true. It is the reason for our hope. Without love, there would be no hope. Only love creates hope.

Read Psalm 31:24. What does this verse say about how hope affects us?

Hope fills us with good feelings and thoughts. It makes us want to do good things. Hope gives new strength. And hope lets us sing and be joyful. So, hope is very important for life. Without hope, what is the purpose of life?

But having hope is different from believing things will get better in the future. Some people believe that everything will get better: the weather, school grades, how much money they have, and so on. But hope is not blind belief that things will get better. Instead, hope rests on a belief in how faithful God is. Hope rests on a belief that God will keep the promises that He has given in the past. It believes that God will do what He says because He is faithful and true. This is because God has shown that we can depend on Him. And He does not change His mind. So we can trust Him to do what He says. This truth is the reason for our hope.

There is no question that the reason for our hope is found in Jesus on the cross. After all, we can look to the Cross and see in the most powerful way how real God's love is for us. The Cross gives to us and to the universe an example of just what our God is truly like. This example cannot be matched or equaled by anything else. We are fallen (sinful). We live only a short time. And we live in a giant universe. But we still can find hope. We cannot find it in ourselves. We cannot find it in whatever "great" things we do. But we can find it in our God, who has shown Himself to us on the cross.

How is the Advent hope rooted in God's faithful promises? How does hope influence our lives? How can we develop lifestyles that show hope instead of despair?

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read parts of Ellen G. White's *Ye [You] Shall Receive Power*, especially the October section "Ready for the Spirit."

Here is a short description of all the things that the Holy Spirit does. The Holy Spirit works in harmony with God the Father and God the Son to save us. The Holy Spirit wakes us up from our spiritual deaths. He leads us to an awareness of our sinfulness. He opens our eyes to the fact that we are lost. He fills us with the desire for change. And He leads us to Jesus Christ, who alone can fill the needs of our souls.

The Spirit gives us hope that we are saved. He always points us to Jesus and to what Jesus has done for us. He helps us become more like Jesus. He keeps us faithful in our walk with God. He helps us to do God's will (plan for our lives). And He gives us the power to be workers for God.

The Holy Spirit also helped men to write the Bible. The Bible is important as our safe guide and rulebook for our Christian life. It shows us the truth.

Where, then, would we be without the Holy Spirit? What could we do without the Holy Spirit? We would be miserable and lost without Him. We could do nothing that would give God the glory and honor. Thanks be to Jesus for having promised and sent the Holy Spirit. "The Holy Spirit was the greatest of all gifts that Jesus could ask from His Father. He asked for it to uplift His people."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Ye [You] Shall Receive Power*, page 13.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 Spend more time on thinking about the answers to these questions: What is sin? What is holiness? We believe the Bible to be the Word of God. So, why should that make our understanding of what sin and holiness are different from those who do not believe in the Bible? How is our belief different from theirs? What does the Bible teach us about sin and about holiness that other ideas and beliefs do not?
- 2 What part of the work of the Holy Spirit has been most valuable to you? Why was it so important? Share your answer with your class. How has this changed your life?
- 3 In class, talk about the hope that we have in Jesus. Suppose someone were to ask about the reason for "the hope you have" (1 Peter 3:15, NIV). What answer would you give, and why?

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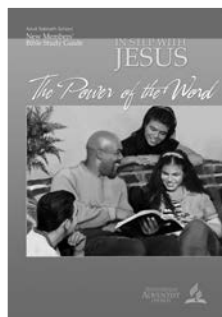
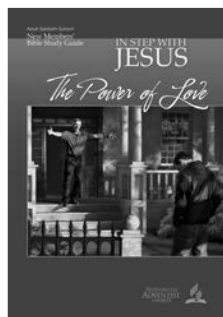
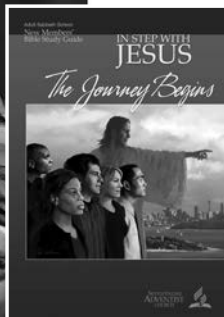
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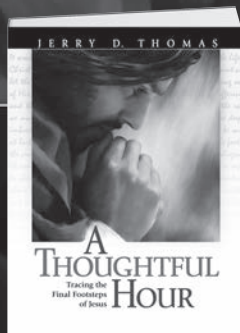
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