

DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit and the Living Word

Lesson #11

We have already looked at some of the topics which relate to the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. We have studied the doctrine of inspiration and discovered that the Scriptures are a by-product of the Holy Spirit moving men to write down the Word of God without error. We have also looked at illumination, the doctrine that explains how the Holy Spirit enables believers to understand the inspired Word of God. In this lesson we will discover why the Scriptures describe the Word of God as “living,” “active,” “sharper,” “piercing,” etc., and how that relates to the Holy Spirit. We will purposely not focus on the Holy Spirit’s role in bringing people to salvation and save that particular subject for another lesson.

I. DEFINITION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE LIVING WORD OF GOD

- A. Thomas Watson in *A Body of Divinity* said, “When the Holy Spirit joins himself with the chariot of his Word, it becomes effectual.”¹
- B. Watson also said: “The ministry of the Word is the pipe or organ; the Spirit of God blowing in it, effectually changes men's hearts. *‘While Peter spoke, the Holy Spirit fell on all them that heard the word of God’ (Acts 10:04)*. Ministers knock at the door of men's hearts, the Spirit comes with a key and opens the door. *‘A certain woman named Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened’ (Acts 16:14)*.”²
- C. Thomas Watson in his work *The Godly Man’s Picture* said, “The motions of the Spirit are always consonant with the Word. The Word is the chariot in which the Spirit of God rides; whichever way the tide of the Word runs, that way the wind of the Spirit blows.”³
- D. The Holy Spirit is the living force of the Scriptures. The Scriptures attribute various qualities to the Word of God which tell us it is a living entity (**Heb. 4:12**). How can the mere writings of men have such living qualities? The answer is, “They can’t!” But the Scriptures are not the “mere” writings of men. They are the living and abiding Word of God. The Spirit works in conjunction with the Word like a sculptor with a chisel He chips away sin from our lives. Like a toy, which needs batteries to work, so is the Word needs the Holy Spirit to make it work in our lives. Scripture affects us because the Holy Spirit effectually works through the Word of God to change us into Christ’s likeness.

¹Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity*, 35.

²Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity*, 186.

³Thomas Watson, *The Godly Man’s Picture*, Libronix PBB edition.

II. THOUGHTS TO PONDER ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE LIVING WORD OF GOD

- A. Billy Graham said in his work *The Holy Spirit*: “The Word is what the Spirit uses. So the important element is that the Word of God be proclaimed. Thousands of pastors, Sunday school teachers, and Christian workers are powerless because they do not make the Word the source of their preaching or teaching. When we preach or teach the Scriptures, we open the door for the Holy Spirit to do His work. God has not promised to bless oratory or clever preaching. He has promised to bless His Word. He has said that it will not return to Him “empty” (**Isa. 55:11**).”⁴
- B. Thomas Watson in *A Body of Divinity*: “This sword of the Spirit cuts down vice (**Eph. 6:17**). Out of this tower of Scripture is thrown a millstone upon the head of sin. The Scripture is the royal law which commands not only the actions, but affections; it binds the heart to good behavior. Where is there such holiness to be found, as is dug up out of this sacred mine? Who could be the author of such a book but God himself?”⁵
- C. Thomas Watson in *The Doctrine of Repentance*: “It is astonishing to consider what different effects the Word has upon men. Some at a sermon are like Jonah: their heart is tender and they let tears fall. Others are no more affected with it than a deaf man with music. Some grow better by the Word, others grow worse. The same earth which causes sweetness in the grape, causes bitterness in the wormwood. What is the reason the Word works so differently? It is because the Spirit of God carries the Word to the conscience of one, and not another. One has received the divine anointing and not the other (**1 John 2:20**). I pray that the dew may fall with the manna that the Spirit may go along with the Word. The chariot of ordinances will not carry us to heaven unless the Spirit of God joins himself to this chariot (**Acts 8:29**).”⁶
- D. John Calvin in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*: “The word is, in regard to those to whom it is preached, like the sun which shines upon all, but is of no use to the blind. In this matter we are all naturally blind; and hence the word cannot penetrate our mind unless the Spirit, that internal teacher, by his enlightening power make an entrance for it.”⁷
- E. Charles Hodge in his *Systematic Theology*: “. . .the Word of God cannot be conceived of without the Spirit; if the Holy Spirit could be separated from the Word, it would not be the Word of God, but the word of man.”⁸

⁴Billy Graham, *The Holy Spirit*, pgs. 46-47.

⁵Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity*, pgs. 27-28.

⁶Thomas Watson, *The Doctrine of Repentance*, Libronix PBB version.

⁷John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III, ii, 34.

⁸Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, quoting Hollaz, (Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 3:480-481.

III. **SCRIPTURAL PROOF THAT THE WORD OF GOD IS LIVING AND DIVINELY POWERFUL**

- A. **Psa. 19:7-11** – “The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. 8 The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. 9 The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether. 10 They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. 11 Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; In keeping them there is great reward.”
- B. **Isa. 40:8** – “The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.”
- C. **Isa. 55:8-11** -- “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the Lord. 9 “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts. 10 “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it bear and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; 11 So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.”
- D. **Jer. 5:14** -- “Therefore, thus says the Lord, the God of hosts, “Because you have spoken this word, Behold, I am making My words in your mouth fire And this people wood, and it will consume them.”
- E. **Jer. 23:28-29** -- “The prophet who has a dream may relate his dream, but let him who has My word speak My word in truth. What does straw have in common with grain?” declares the Lord. 29 “Is not My word like fire?” declares the Lord, “and like a hammer which shatters a rock?”
- F. **Luke 24:32** – “They said to one another, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?”
- G. **John 6:63** “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.”
- H. **John 15:3** “You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.”
- I. **Acts 2:37** – “Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?”

- J. **Rom. 1:16** -- For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”
- K. **Eph. 6:17** – “And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”
- L. **I Thess. 2:13** – “For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.”
- M. **Heb. 4:12** – “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”
- N. **James 1:18** – “In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.”
- O. **I Pet. 1:22-25** – “Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, 23 for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. 24 For, “All flesh is like grass, And all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, And the flower falls off, 25 But the word of the Lord endures forever.” And this is the word which was preached to you.”

IV. **ERRORS CONCERNING THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE LIVING WORD OF GOD**

- A. Error – The Bible is merely the writings of men.
- B. Error – People can get saved apart from the Word of God.
- C. Error – You can be a godly Christian without regularly reading the Word.
- D. Error – There are extra-biblical resources that can help you grow just as much or more in the Lord as the Bible.
- E. Error – If you try using the Bible to grow a church and evangelize the lost, but it doesn't work, you should try something else.
- F. Error – “I read the Bible and it didn't do much for me, therefore the Bible must not be the Word of God or attested by the Holy Spirit.”

V. **APPLICATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE LIVING WORD OF GOD**

- A. You need to regularly read, study, meditate, memorize, and apply the Scriptures.
- B. You can be assured that when you read the Word of God you will be changed.
- C. When you witness to people you must remember that the only thing that will bring them to salvation is the Word of God attested by the Spirit of God.
- D. Even though you may have studied certain portions of Scriptures thoroughly, if you study them again, you usually discover new insights.
- E. Our time spent in the Word is directly proportional to how much we can expect to grow in Christ. The opposite is also true. If we neglect reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating upon the word, our walk with the Lord will suffer.
- F. When teaching the Word, it is necessary to remember that it will have no life-changing effect unless it is energized by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we must always rely on the Holy Spirit to work through His Word and not trust in ourselves and our teaching abilities to do what only the Holy Spirit can do.

“The reading of Scripture itself enables the Holy Spirit to enlighten us and to do His work in us. While we read the Word, its message saturates our hearts, whether we are conscious of what is happening or not. The Word, with all its mysterious power, touches our lives and gives us its power.”
(Billy Graham, *The Holy Spirit*, pg. 44.)

And look to the Holy Spirit, that he would bless what he directs you to say. 'It would be better to speak five words by the promptings of the Holy Spirit than to utter whole volumes without his guidance. Better to be filled with silent musings by the blessed Spirit of God than pour forth floods of words and sentences, however engaging, without his influence. There is an irresistible power about the man who has an unction from the Holy One which Demosthenes or Pericles, Cicero or Socrates, never dreamed of. Put the man up to speak to his fellow-men who is endowed with this mysterious power, and he will make hearts of stone melt, and force a way for the truth of God through gates of brass and bars of triple steel. Where the Divine Witness attests, the word spoken there is a majesty in the simplest utterances that carries conviction to the heart, while it makes Satan and all his demonic hoards tremble. Seek for this might.⁹

⁹Charles H. Spurgeon, *Spurgeon's Sermons*., "Speaking on God's Behalf", Vol. 62, electronic ed., Logos Library System; (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1998).