

THE GOOD NEWS FOR LAODICEA

*Study Guide Six***The Holy Spirit is More Powerful Than You Think**

The Pope of Rome claims to be the Vicar of Christ, His representative on earth, taking His place now that Christ has ascended to heaven. If that were true, it would be extremely bad news for everyone, for the Pope can do nothing to help you and me, so far as salvation is concerned. He is very far away!

Jesus said that His true Vicar on earth is the Holy Spirit. That is tremendously Good News, because He can help you and me even more than Jesus could if He were here in person. In fact, He is called the Spirit of Christ. He is Christ's Representative, divested of physical limitations, but acting in His stead.

The Bible teaches the worship of one God because the three Persons of the Godhead are one. That is why Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit comes, *He* comes, not personally as when He returns in the clouds of heaven, but in the Spirit.

As Jesus is closer to us than popular teaching allows (*Study Guide Five*), so the Holy Spirit is closer to us than we have thought. He is as much a Friend as Jesus is. He is on our side, trying to get us ready to enter heaven, not trying to keep us out.

To understand what He is doing is to perceive a deeper dimension of the gospel as glorious Good News. The 1888 message makes it clear.

The Holy Spirit—the Vicar of Christ

1. How did Jesus introduce us to the coming of the Holy Spirit? What is the meaning of the name which He gave Him? John 14:16-18, 26.

Note: (a) *Verse 16*: He is “another *parakletos*,” that is, a Replacement for Himself. He is sent “in My name” as My Vicar, says Jesus. (b) The name Comforter is from the Greek word which means “the one who is called to come and sit down beside you forever” (*para*, from which comes our word parallel—two railroad tracks are parallel, and they always stay together; and *kletos*, the One called). (c) He will never leave us, although we can grieve Him and drive Him off. (d) *Verse 17*: As Christ is the truth (John 14:6), so the Comforter is the Spirit of truth. When we reject truth, we grieve Him away. (e) *Verse 18*: We are closer to Christ today by the Spirit than the Twelve were 2000 years ago when they walked and talked with Him personally. (f) *Verse 26*: He is a Master Teacher and Stimulator of our memory.

2. Why did Jesus have to go away personally? How does the Holy Spirit give evidence of His love for us? John 16:7-11.

Note: *Verse 7:* If Jesus had remained here *personally or physically*, He would have been our Pope (I speak reverently). But you could not have a visit with Him except by going through His secretaries and waiting for months or years for a few precious minutes with Him. Many of earth's billions could never know Him.

But through the Holy Spirit each of us has unlimited access to Christ as though we were each the only human being on earth. The Holy Spirit is God the Spirit, Christ the Spirit, everywhere at once. He has five billion people to care for, but He is infinite. Thus He gives full attention to each of us. Stand in the bright sunshine; you couldn't get more of it if you were the only person in the world.

Verse 8: He proves His love for us by doing His first work—convicting us of sin. Pain is unpleasant to experience, but it is a blessing. The sense of pain protects the body from being destroyed. The conviction of sin is also painful, but it is as important to yield to His conviction as it is to have a cancerous body member surgically removed or healed.

Verses 9, 10: If Jesus were here personally, we would see our sins in the light of His perfect righteousness, as Peter cried out, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8). In His absence, the Holy Spirit brings the same conviction that came to Peter. This has to be a supernatural work, for it is never natural for us to see how sinful we really are.

3. Read John 16:13-15, and ponder your privilege as the receiver of all this priceless blessing.

Note: The only reason the church is divided and confused by contrary winds of doctrine is that the Holy Spirit has too often been grieved away. If He were welcomed He would guide us in unity into "all the truth," and the great gospel commission would soon be finished (Ephesians 4:3-6, 12-15). The 1888 message was a part of the fulfillment of that promise of Jesus.

The Former and the Latter Rain of the Holy Spirit

4. Please get clearly in mind the difference between the former (or early) rain, and the latter rain. Read Jeremiah 5:24; Hosea 6:3; Joel 2:23,24, 28-32; Acts 2:4, 16-21; James 5:7,8.

Note: The great gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was the former or early rain. For nearly two thousand years, that gift has been a powerful blessing. But in Palestinian Biblical agriculture, the early rains were not sufficient to bring the grain to maturity and produce a harvest. There must come a latter rain. So with the work of the Holy Spirit. There must be a final outpouring that prepares God's "grain" for the harvest. The harvest is the end of the world and the coming of the Lord. See Matthew 13:39; Revelation 14:14, 15; *Early Writings*, pp. 71, 86, 271.

5. We have been waiting and praying for this gift for a long time! When will the promise of the latter rain be fulfilled?

Ellen White answers this question. It had its “beginning” with the 1888 message (cf. *General Conference Bulletin* 1893, pp. 183, 185, 205, 377). It was also the beginning of the work of the fourth angel who is to lighten the earth with the glory of a powerful message of salvation from sin (*Review and Herald*, November 22, 1892; *Selected Messages*, Book One, pp. 234, 235). God has kept His promise; He has been faithful. But “in a great measure” we (through our forefathers) rejected the blessing. Likewise, the Jews still pray for the coming of their Messiah, but the Lord was faithful in sending the true Messiah nearly two millenia ago. Thus their prayers for the coming of their Messiah are in vain. They need an experience of repentance.

The Good News That Some Cannot Believe

6. What kind of battle rages in each human heart? Romans 7:15-24.

Note: It is a mistake to conclude from this passage that defeat is the normal experience for the believer in Christ. Be sure also to read where Paul introduces the Holy Spirit as the answer to this problem—Romans 8:1, 2. To “walk...after the Spirit” means to walk *with* Him, to let Him hold you by the hand. Complete victory is assured: He makes us “free from the law [principle] of sin and death.” But how does He do this for us?

7. Is the Holy Spirit a passive observer of our battle with the flesh, giving us a little help now and then, or does He get into the battle Himself? Galatians 5:16-18.

Note: Read this text carefully. What are those things “ye cannot do”? Good things, or bad things? Many misread this passage and construe it to teach the most terribly bad news imaginable. They conclude that even when the Holy Spirit strives (“lust”) against the flesh, we still cannot do the *good things* that we would like to do. Can you imagine any news worse than that?

Read it again carefully: Because the Holy Spirit continually strives against the flesh, you cannot do the evil things the flesh prompts you to do *if you will consent to “walk in the Spirit.”* Light is stronger than darkness; love is stronger than hate; the Holy Spirit is stronger than the flesh. No, He will never force us, but He will lead us. “Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left” (Isaiah 30:21). Join your consent to His promptings and leadings. Say Yes to Him! Paul adds in verse 18 of our text, “But [the Greek means *moreover*], if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.” An extra blessing comes: your sense of self-reproach and condemnation is gone, as well as your self-centered fear.

True or False: It's Easier to Be Saved Than to Be Lost

8. The message of the three angels of Revelation 14 is the “everlasting Good News.” How does Jesus want us to understand His use of the words “easy” and “hard”? Matthew 11:28-30; Acts 26:14, 15.

Note: Our Saviour does not contradict Himself. When He says that we should “strive to enter in at the strait gate,” He does not deny Himself (cf. Luke 13:24). The word “strait” does not mean difficult; it means *narrow*. We cannot enter unless we divest ourselves of this world’s baggage of the *love of self*. Many people refuse to do this, and they will be lost. But the more clearly we see the cross of Christ, the easier it becomes to take up our own cross.

Read His words carefully, again. A yoke always joins two oxen. Why is His “yoke...easy”? *Because He is in it, pulling with us by the Holy Spirit, and He bears the weight.* Why is it “hard” to “kick against the pricks” as Saul of Tarsus was doing? *Because it is hard to fight against the mighty power of the Holy Spirit.* People wear themselves out resisting that persistent love.

9. Note how Ellen White agrees with the words of Jesus:

“Do not...conclude that the upward path is the hard and the downward road the easy way. All along the road that leads to death there are pains and penalties, there are sorrows and disappointments, there are warnings not to go on. God’s love has made it hard for the heedless and headstrong to destroy themselves....All the way up the steep road leading to eternal life there are well-springs of joy to refresh the weary” (*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 139, 140).

10. What hopeful Good News do we find in the 1888 message?

“It can never be repeated too often, that under the reign of grace it is just as easy to right, as under the reign of sin it is easy to do wrong. This must be so; for if there is not more power in grace than there is in sin, then there can be no salvation from sin....Let no one ever attempt to serve God with anything but the present, living power of God, that makes him a new creature....Then the service of God will indeed be in ‘newness of life’; then it will be found that his yoke is indeed ‘easy’ and his burden ‘light’; then his service will be found indeed to be with ‘joy unspeakable and full of glory’” (Jones, *Review and Herald*, September 1, 1896)

“As boundless grace is given to every one bringing salvation to the extent of its own full measure, then if any one does not have boundless salvation, why is it?--Plainly it can be only because he will not take that which is given” (*Ibid.*, September 22, 1896)

“It is not *you* who are to do that which He [the Lord] pleases; but, ‘It shall accomplish that which *I* please.’ *You* are not to read or hear the word of God, and say, *I* must do that, *I* will do that. *You* are to open the heart to that word, that it may accomplish the will of God in you....The word of God itself is to do it, and you are to *let it*. ‘*Let the word of God dwell in you*’” (*Ibid.*, October 20, 1896).

11. To how many people is the Holy Spirit given? Acts 2:17.

Note: God is no respecter of persons. The last page of the Bible extends the final invitation to all. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come” (Revelation 22:17). The Holy Spirit is appealing to people who we may think are hopeless. Many more than we suppose will respond. God’s true, honest people are still in Babylon. They will take the place of those who will leave the remnant church who have long professed the truth but have rejected it in heart because they have resisted the kind of self-crucified devotion to Christ that the cross demands.

Angels and the Holy Spirit still cooperate in holding back the final outburst of strife and plagues symbolized by the loosing of the “four winds” (Revelation 7:1-4). You cannot drive down the highway safely unless the Holy Spirit restrains some maniac from plowing into you. The entire world would be engulfed in ruin worse than Beirut unless the Holy Spirit were restraining the evil that is about to burst loose.

But He is being withdrawn from the world, not because He wants to leave but because mankind are steadily driving Him off. “Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts” (Hebrews 2:7, 8). The final sin against Him which is unpardonable is that last choice to reject His leading, His pleading when He says, “This is the way, walk ye in it.” If we reject His conviction of sin and His bringing to our remembrance the truth, then He is grieved, and turns away forever. We are all rapidly coming to a final choice—to go all the way with the Holy Spirit and be sealed for translation, or to make a last choice to reject Him (Ephesians 4:30).

Only one thing is truly difficult for us—and that is to believe how good the Good News is. Our constant battle is to “fight the good fight of *faith*” (1 Timothy 6:12). Mankind is so held captive to unbelief that nothing can break through those chains except the truth of the cross of Christ and the full reality of the Holy Spirit’s constant ministry. He is still the Vicar of the great High Priest who is cleansing the heavenly sanctuary.