

The Holy Spirit's Testimony to the Blood of Jesus

By William Reid

THE great work which the Holy Spirit is now occupied in performing, is that of *directing sinners to Jesus, and inclining and enabling them to come to Him, that they may be saved*; and since this is the case, I am a fellow-worker with God the Holy Spirit only in so far as I tell anxious sinners TO LOOK TO JESUS ONLY, and have “*redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins,*” as their *first and great business*; and “*this one thing I do.*”

The question is not, whether do we think it scriptural for an awakened sinner to desire the secret and power-giving presence of the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of his understanding, and shew him the all-sufficiency of Christ. That is what neither we nor any other true Christian would for a moment think of forbidding. Nor is it the question, whether the work of the Holy Spirit be necessary in order to salvation. The very fact of writing as we have done on regeneration, as well as writing I to encourage our brethren to meet together, and also meeting ourselves, to pray for the Holy Spirit to put forth His reviving, sanctifying, convincing, and converting power, will satisfy all ingenuous minds that we hold the absolute necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit in order to the regeneration and conversion of perishing souls.

The only question, then, which falls to be considered is, *What am I to say to an awakened and anxious sinner?* Am I to say simply “*Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*” (Acts 16:31), as said the apostle of the Gentiles to the trembling jailor of Philippi? or am I, *as the first thing I do*, to exhort him to pray for the Holy Spirit to convince him more deeply of his sin, enlighten his darkened understanding, renew his perverse will, and enable him to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to the saving of his soul? Am I to direct him, as the grand thing he has to do, to believe in Jesus, and accept His blood-shedding as the only foundation of his peace with God; or to seek the work of the Spirit as an addition to Christ's work, in order that he may be justified? The former leads to *justification by faith alone*, the true Apostolic doctrine of the churches of the first age; the latter leads to *justification by sanctification*, the pernicious doctrine of a later era, by embracing which a man can never reach any satisfactory assurance that his sins are pardoned, even after a lifetime's religious experience and devout and sincere performance of religious duties;² whereas, by teaching *salvation by the blood of Christ alone*, a man may, like the Philippian jailor, “*rejoice, believing in God with all his house,*” (Acts 16:34), “*in the same hour*” in which Christ is presented as the *alone object* of personal faith and consequent reconciliation.

There is, we regret to think, a large class of professing Christians who seem to have the unfounded notion engrained in their minds, that Christ came as a Saviour in the fulness of time, and on being rejected and received up into glory, the Holy Spirit came down to be the Saviour of sinners in His stead, and that whether men are now to be saved or lost depends entirely on the work of the Holy Spirit in them, and not on the work of Christ done for them; whereas the Holy Spirit was given as the crowning evidence that JESUS IS STILL THE SAVIOUR, even now that He is in heaven; and the great work of the Spirit is not to assume the place of Jesus as our Saviour, but to bear witness to Christ Jesus as *the only Saviour*, and by His quickening grace bring lost sinners to Him, that they may become “the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:26). This He did on the blessed day of Pentecost, when thousands of divinely quickened souls received His testimony, believed “in the name of Jesus,” and obtained “remission of sins” (Acts 2:38).

The Holy Ghost is *not* the Saviour, and He never professed to be so, but His great work, in so far as the unconverted are concerned, is to direct sinners to the Saviour, and to get them persuaded to embrace Him and rely upon Him. When speaking of the Holy Spirit, Jesus said distinctly to His disciples, “He shall not speak of Himself...HE SHALL GLORIFY ME” (John 16:13,14). If to glorify Christ be the grand aim and peculiar work of the Holy Spirit, should it not also be the grand aim and constant work of those who believe in Him, and more especially of the ministers of His gospel?

The whole drift of the Holy Spirit's inspired oracles, as we have them in the Bible, is *to glorify Christ*; and the gospel ministry has been granted by Him (Eph 4:11,12), to keep the purport of those Scriptures incessantly before the minds of men, and in so doing to beseech sinners to be reconciled to God. Now, Holy Scripture throughout clearly teaches that, simply on account of the one finished, all-sufficient and eternally

efficacious work of Christ, sinners who believe in Him are “*justified from all things*” ; that we are “*justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood*” (Rom 3:24,25); and we are justified as “*sinners,*” as “*ungodly,*” (Rom 5:6,8) and not as having an incipient personal righteousness wrought in us by the Holy Ghost. Few men, with the Word of God in their hands, *would subscribe to such a doctrine*; and yet it is the *latent* creed of the great majority of professing Christians. It is, in fact, the universal creed of the natural heart. Fallen human nature, when under terror, says, Get into a better state by all means; *feel* better, *pray* better, *do* better; become holier, and reform your life and conduct, and God will have mercy upon you! But grace says, “*Behold, God is my salvation!*” (Isa 12:2). To give God some equivalent for His mercy, either in the shape of an inward work of sanctification, or of an outward work of reformation, the natural man can comprehend and approve of; but to be justified by faith alone, on the ground of the finished work of Christ, irrespective of both, is quite beyond his comprehension. But “the foolishness of God is wiser than men” (1 Cor 1:25); for, instead of preaching holiness as a ground of peace with God, “*we preach Christ crucified*” (1 Cor 1:23), “*for other foundation can no man lay*” —either for justification or sanctification— “*than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ*” (1 Cor 3:11); and, whatever others may do, I am “determined not to know anything among you, *save Jesus Christ and him crucified*” (1 Cor 2:2).

“O my Redeemer, who for me wast slain, Who bringest me forgiveness and release, Whose death has ransom'd me to God again, And now my heart can rest in perfect peace!

Still more and more do Thou my soul redeem, From every bondage set me wholly free; Though evil oft the mightiest power may seem, Still make me more than conqueror, Lord, in Thee!”

FOOTNOTES:

1. The author refers to his book, “*The Spirit Of Jesus,*” which is entirely devoted to the elucidation of the work of the Holy Ghost in the conversion of souls.

2. This is referred to in a forcible and memorable manner by Thomas Adams, one of the old Puritans, when he is discoursing on “*the first-born which are written in heaven:*”—“Woe” says he, “to that religion which teacheth even the best saint to doubt of his salvation while he liveth! Hath Christ said, *Believe*, and shall man say, *Doubt?* This is a rack and strappado to the conscience; for he that doubteth of his salvation doubteth of God's love, and he that doubteth God's love cannot heartily love Him again. If this love be wanting, it is not possible to have true peace. Oh the terrors of this troubled conscience! It is like an ague; it may have intermission, but the fit will return and shake him. An untoward beast is a trouble to a man; an untoward wife is a greater trouble; but the greatest trouble of all is an untoward conscience. *Blessed is the man whose sins are forgiven;* where there is no remission of sins, *there is no blessedness.* Now, there is no true blessedness but that which is *enjoyed;* and none is enjoyed unless it be *felt;* and it cannot be felt unless it be *possessed;* and it is not possessed unless a man *know it;* and how does he know it that doubts whether he hath it or not?”