

THE SAVING WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Introduction One Sunday afternoon at a seaside resort, a Christian evangelist was out on the beach, using a "Bible Bee-hive" device to explain the Gospel to a group of boys and girls. Each cardboard "Bee" that he pulled out of the model hive bore a short, printed exhortation from the Bible: "Be patient"; "Be kind"; "Be honest"; "Be truthful"; "Be sober"; "Be vigilant"; "Be pure". He must have had at least a dozen of these "Bible Bees".

As he drew them out one by one, he contrasted the wages of sin with the sure rewards of a life of virtue. After some minutes of respectful attention, a hand shot up, and an unexpected challenge came from one young listener: "Please, sir, you've told us to be patient, pure and good, but you haven't told us **HOW** to be!"

All unwittingly, that youngster had put her finger squarely upon the most baffling and urgent of all religious questions: How can we bridge the gulf between knowing the Gospel and living the Gospel?

How can the beautiful ideals of Christianity be translated into corresponding actions? How does the saving power of Christ actually enter the soul of man?

The answer is: "Through the mighty agency of the Holy Spirit."

Thank God, He does not leave us staring in baffled hopelessness at what He asks us to do. Not only does He give us the facts of the Gospel, He gives us the power to live in harmony with these facts! He does this by the gift of His Spirit. It is the presence and power of the Holy Spirit that makes Christianity a dynamic, supernatural, saving religion. Let us open the Bible and learn what it teaches about the Holy Spirit.

Discussion 1.—WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND WHAT IS HIS WORK?

The Spirit of God is mentioned 350 times in the Bible (88 times in the Old Testament and 262 times in the New Testament). From these we select the following facts:

His Deity. The Bible everywhere ascribes the attributes of God to the Holy Spirit. He is all-powerful (Luke 1:35). He is eternal (Heb. 9:14). He is everywhere present (Ps. 139:7-12). He knows all things (I Cor. 2:10, 11). Such statements could be true only of One who was God in the fullest sense.

His Personality. Intelligence, emotions, and will are the three essential elements of a true personality, and the Bible ascribes all of these qualities to the Holy Spirit. He "knows" (I Cor. 2:10, 11). He "loves" (Rom. 15:30). He can be "grieved" (Eph. 4:30). He "bears witness" (Rom. 8:16). He "communes" with men (II Cor. 13:14). In John 14, 15 and 16, Jesus applied the personal pronouns "He" and "Him" to the Holy Spirit 24 times. Such statements could never apply to a vague, impersonal influence; they could be true only of a **Person**.

His Work. He convicts of sin (John 16:8). He sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts (Rom. 5:5). He brings about the new birth (John 3:3-8). He guides into all truth (John 16:13). He gives power for life and service (Acts 1:8).

All the close, personal, intimate work of God upon our hearts is performed by the Holy Spirit. He is the direct touch of the warm and gentle hand of God. Every stab of conviction; every impulse towards truth and righteousness; every noble resolve; every stumbling half-step that we take towards God is prompted and empowered by Him. We could not even begin to be Christians without some work of the Spirit of God within us, and from the first stirring of spiritual life until we draw our last breath, we are wholly dependent upon Him.

To deprive our souls of the Holy Spirit would be as disastrous as to deprive the earth of its atmosphere!