

Ev221 Sharing Your Spiritual Journey

Lesson Ev221-8 Salvation: the Holy Spirit's Role

School children are often called to stand before the principal or headmaster. The child is usually very nervous, even afraid. They wonder, “Have I done something wrong?” Happily, they may be commended or rewarded instead of being scolded. Sometimes, they may just be given some instructions. In this lesson, Jesus is about to be crucified and he knows it. The disciples are with him in an upper room. They are fearful and anxious. They know he has been talking about his death and resurrection, but they haven’t yet grasped his meaning. They know the leaders in Jerusalem want to capture him. Jesus wants to comfort his close friends. So he tries once again to calm their fears by telling them what to expect in the days to come.

In his Gospel, John recalls Jesus’ teaching in one of his final talks with the disciples before he is crucified. Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because people do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned” (John 16:7-11).

In this passage, we understand Jesus’ teaching as referring to three aspects of the conversion process in the life of humans. We can call these three phases: Quest, Encounter, and Ongoing Change through Discipleship. These phases of the conversion process will be explained in detail in the next three lessons. In this lesson, we will look at how the *Advocate*, the Holy Spirit, is at work in the salvation process, according to Jesus.

The word in the original language is *parakletos*, meaning ‘helper, advocate, counselor or comforter.’ The Holy Spirit is literally ‘one who comes alongside’ us. In the context of this passage, he is more like a prosecuting attorney in a court of law. His work here is one of ‘convicting of guilt’ or ‘proving the world to be wrong’ in a legal or judicial sense. You might label this passage: “the world on trial before God.”

There are three areas of understanding that occur in the life of one in whom the Spirit is working. The first is conviction or exposing of sin—because people do not believe in Jesus. Sin separates us from God. We are naturally selfish. Our focus is on me, myself, and I.

In addition, every human has in their heart a desire to be divine, to rise above their human existence into the spiritual realm. It is a unique desire that God gives humans alone, not animals. It is part of what God did when he created humans in his image. We yearn for something more, something beyond ourselves. We long to have a loving relationship with him.

This yearning or desire for divinity sets us on a quest or journey seeking after a kind of god-like existence. But soon enough, we realize it can’t be achieved. We are stuck in our bodies, ‘earth-suits,’ so to speak. This is an understanding of separateness from God, the realization of

our sinfulness. It comes from the Holy Spirit exposing, or convincing us, of our sinfulness. According to Jesus, it is the first phase of the spiritual journey toward salvation.

The second area is the recognition of righteousness—“because I am going to the Father,” Jesus said. He was speaking of the Cross event, his death. This includes not just his death, but his life, death, and resurrection, as told in the Gospels. So, the recognition of righteousness includes that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, who was sent to earth to die. It includes that he was resurrected on our behalf. All this comes through hearing the story of the gospel.

The third phase of this process of conviction by the Holy Spirit is the awareness of judgment—because the evil one stands condemned already. The Book of James says, “The Judge is standing at the door!” (5:9). Three places in the New Testament tell us Jesus is going to come back to “judge the living and the dead” (2Tim 4:1).

The sense of impending judgment for believers, already a reality for the devil, has a corrective influence on our lives. It keeps us on the straight and narrow road, so to speak. It is the catalyst to our ongoing obedience and discipleship, or in other words, our spiritual transformation.

This story is **important** because Jesus taught about the work of the Holy Spirit in the salvation process. The Holy Spirit is ‘one who comes alongside’ as a counselor, helper, advocate, or as the one who convicts us and exposes our need for redemption.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that salvation is often not a one-time experience, but more of a process involving three phases of quest, encounter, and ongoing change through discipleship.

Review Questions

1. What is the first role of the Holy Spirit as Advocate, according to Jesus in this passage?

[Pause 5 seconds.]

A. If you said, “The Holy Spirit comes to convict us of our sinfulness before God,” you are correct.

2. What is the aspect of judgment that the Holy Spirit is proving the world to be wrong about in the saying of Jesus? [Pause]

A. If you answered, “The Holy Spirit makes us aware that judgment is coming for all, because Satan already stands condemned,” you answered correctly.

3. Why is this teaching about the Spirit’s work in salvation so important? [Pause]

A. If you said, “Jesus is teaching about the Spirit’s work in salvation so that the disciples will know that the Spirit will be with them to bring this about after he leaves them,” you are right.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to think about Jesus’ teaching about the work of the Advocate. Find a friend and discuss whether your salvation experiences included quest, encounter, and ongoing change through discipleship.