***God the Holy Spirit

RV29-01***

Please turn with me in your Bibles to Revelation. We begin chapter 3. This is the letter to Sardis. We have been looking at these seven letters which we find in Revelation 2 and 3, which, in one respect, are reflecting to us a condition that existed in the first century of the Christian era. These seven churches all existed on the edge of the area which we know of today as Turkey. It was in that part of western Turkey. That is the part which, in the times of the Bible, was known as Asia Minor. But these churches all had a different situation. Though they all existed at the same time, each of them had a different situation that existed within each congregation. Those conditions that existed are illustrative of the problems that Christian churches have faced down through all the centuries. The guidance which the Lord Jesus Christ gave to each church as He looked at its particular condition and problems is the guidance for us today.

**The Letter to Ephesus**

Remember that we began, first of all, with the letter which was to the church of Ephesus. This represented Christianity's historical period of Pentecost to the year 100 A.D. This was the time when the church was newborn. It was in the first flush of its enthusiasm and missionary zeal, and its orientation to the doctrines of the Word of God. But there was a problem that was beginning to slip in, and that was an erosion between the believers of mental attitude love. There was a little bit of yielding on their part of mental ill will toward one another. There were little specks of bitterness in the minds of the believers toward one another that were already observed by the Lord Jesus Christ, and the warning to them, as to all these churches, was, "Get it straightened out, or I'm going to remove your lamp stand." We already found that the symbol of the lamp stand stands for the local church congregation. The warning to these churches is, "If you don't correct these problems and get back to God's standards for a local church operation, your ministry will be terminated. Indeed, for most of these, in one way or another, in time, that's exactly what happened.

**The Letter to Smyrna**

The next letter was to the church in the city of Smyrna. These cities all go in a circle in the territory of Asia Minor. You move on to the next city down the road, which was Smyrna. This represented, in church history, the period from the year 100 to 314 A.D. This was a time when Christians were persecuted by the state. Here, the power of the Roman Empire was brought to bear to destroy copies of Scripture, and to destroy assemblies of believers. And wherever they could, as time went by, the persecution mounted to seek to destroy this new expression of faith in the form of the Christians who had permeated the Roman Empire.

**The Letter to Pergamum**

We moved down the road to the next city, which was Pergamum. This historically represented church history from 314 to about 600 A.D. This was the time when Emperor Constantine accepted Christianity as his religion. There came then an amalgamation and an accommodation to paganism. So, paganism and Christianity gradually became fused together until it resulted in something totally different than New Testament Christianity.

**The Letter to Thyatira**

We moved down the road a little further, and we came to the city of Thyatira. This was the last letter which we've looked at. This has covered a period over the centuries from 600 to about 1500 A.D. This was a time in which the amalgamation that began in Pergamum came to its fruition in the form of the Roman Catholic Church. Here you had a hybrid system which the Bible describes as the harlot church which will go out into the tribulation period, and it will be the core of the world church which will exist in the period when the antichrist rules the world. That period is, without a doubt, very, very close. There can hardly be any reasonable doubt that that period, when the antichrist will rise up and rule the world, is very near to us indeed. There can be very little doubt that the nations of the world are coming increasingly to climax over the nation of Israel. That is what the Bible tells us is the reason that there will be conflict, and the reason that the scene will be set to bring a strong man onto the scene.

You have no idea the turmoil in the Muslim world today because of the Jews' declaration that the city of Jerusalem has been totally annexed, and that it is now a part of Israel and is now their capital. The Muslim world is infuriated, and the Western world is in fear of getting cut off from its oil supplies. So, suddenly Israel finds itself more isolated than it has ever been in its history. I think this has caught the Jews by surprise as well. They didn't expect this kind of furor to be raised. What is the Jew going to look for? It there's anything Israel needs, it needs a protector, and it needs one fast. That's exactly what the Bible says is coming. Well, now, along with that protector is going to come a religious system which will be imposed upon the world. This religious system was reflected here in the Thyatira letter.

**The Letter to Sardis**

Now we have come to where the Dark Ages have ended. That was the 1,000 years that descended upon all humanity under the domination of the Roman Catholic Church, The superstition, the spiritual ignorance, and the depression of all normal learning has come to an end. The Lord Jesus Christ now takes up letter number five. He addresses here a local church in the city of Sardis. The conditions in the churches of the first century, as we have said, indicate conditions throughout the centuries. The areas that the Lord condemns are the areas for our guidance as we examine our own situation. These are the areas of caution that we must be careful of. So, now as we look at the letter to Sardis, here again are problems for us to avoid, and things He commends for us to follow.

Revelation 3:1 says, "And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write." The word "and" is the Greek word "kai." It's the little conjunction that indicates another letter. That's a sign that He is beginning another dictation to John, who is recording these letters. He addresses it to the "angel." The Greek word for "angel" is "aggelos." The word "aggelos" is the word (exactly what it looks like) that we use for "angel." But it also is the word that means "messenger." In this case, that's the translation. He is writing to the messenger of this church. That messenger is the pastor who is in charge of the local congregation in Sardis. He identifies this messenger as the messenger of the church. The Greek word for church is "ekklesia." The word "ekklesia" comes from two Greek words. It comes from the preposition which means out, and "klesia" from the verb "kaleo" which means "to call." So, the whole word means "to call out." That's what a church is. It's a group of called-out people. A local church is a group of people who've been called out from the mass of the world's humanity. A local church is a group of people who, on an organized basis have gathered together to do the Lord's work. They have been called out from the unsaved world.

The book of Matthew tells us that there is going to be a problem in the local church because it's not only going to be filled with wheat, which is the genuine stuff, but there are going to be a lot of tares, which are the weeds, the non-genuine parts. You have to use a very grace attitude, the Lord said, in dealing with the fact that tares slip in among the wheat of the local church congregation. If you run a church on the basis that you run a pulpit ministry that preaches about all kinds of things in the Bible, like about Noah's flood or about the march of the Exodus generation through the wilderness, or all the other things that are contained in the Bible, then you get to the end of the service and say, "Now, I want everybody who wants to be saved to walk down the aisle," and you haven't even touched upon the gospel, nobody there even knows how to be saved, and the only thing they get the idea of how to be saved is to walk down an aisle. So, they come down an aisle. That is a very horrible thing to do. Anytime you see a church that does that, you should recoil in horror, because what you know that church is doing is sending hundreds upon hundreds of people to hell, because this is how the tares get into the wheat of the local assembly. It's because somebody gives them the idea that some kind of public move is all they need to make in order to be accepted with God. That is devastating to see, and it's a horror that is practiced upon people by the thousands in our country.

So, the group we're talking about, when we speak of the church in the Lord's eyes, in this case, is a local organized group in the city of Sardis. It includes mostly believers, but obviously some unbelievers also. The believers are at various stages of spiritual maturity, but they're in the family of God. Nevertheless, there are some tares who are bearing influence. There are some believers who are at the low level of the scale of personal spiritual development so that they are responding to the tares and creating conflicts within this church.

This church was located at a city called "Sardis." The Greek word is "Sardeis." To this church leader, John was told: "Unto the messenger (the pastor-teacher) of the local organization in Sardis, write." The word "write" is the Greek word "grapho." The word "grapho" is a word for recording words on paper. It is aorist in the tense which means that he's talking about the point at which the words of the Lord Jesus Christ are recorded. It is active. John himself is to do the recording. He's sitting there writing. It is imperative. John is commanded to record these things.

**The City of Sardis**

Remember that Patmos is an island in the Aegean Sea off the coast of Asia Minor, not too far from Sardis. John is sitting here out on this barren rock, and he's copying what Jesus Christ is saying to him concerning the city of Sardis. This city of Sardis is an interesting city. It is located, as we said, in what we know today as modern Turkey in Asia Minor. It's 30 miles southeast from Thyatira, the city of the last letter that we studied. In ancient times, it was the capital of a territory called Lydia. Sardis was the royal capital. So, it was no small city. It was also located on the major east/west travel and communication routes of the ancient world, so Sardis became a very wealthy city. It was rich in gold mines; it was rich in agriculture; and, it was rich in the manufacture of textiles and in the dyeing industry.

**King Croesus**

The last king of Lydia who reigned was one that you've heard of. He was the famous King Croesus, whose name is synonymous with great immeasurable wealth. So when we say somebody is really wealthy, we say, "He's wealthy as Croesus." Well, here's where Croesus came from. In the ancient world, he was the last king of the empire of Lydia, and he ruled from the royal city of Sardis.

Sardis itself is geographically located on a high plateau. It was a plateau which was something like 1,500 feet above the valley. At one end was a mountain range, and there was a land bridge that came across to where Sardis was located. All three sides were precipitous, and could not be scaled. So, it was an easily defensible position. All they had to defend was the one land bridge. If they could keep an army from coming across there, they were virtually impregnable on all other sides. All you had to do on the other sides was to have somebody standing up there with a few appropriate boulders to drop on anybody who was trying to scale up the side, and that would take care of that. A couple of kids could do that. The bridge was the only point of real problem.

The condition of Sardis geographically led to an attitude on the part of some who had preceded Croesus of self-complacency and of arrogance. One of the great historians, Herodotus, who wrote about Croesus and about this condition, indicated that power and wealth breed arrogance which lead to personal ruin. This is known as the Herodotus Doctrine – that power and wealth have a way of breeding in a person arrogance, and arrogance leads to personal ruin. Well, Croesus was wealthy. He was fantastically wealthy. I can't give you the figures of the millions of dollars of gold and silver that was taken from him when the city fell and when he was captured. I could tell you a few years ago it was $6 million, and I don't know what it is today because I haven't been able to keep up with the inflation to be able to update it for you. But it was a vast sum of money. This bred, indeed, arrogance in Croesus.

**Cyrus and the Oracle of Delphi**

In the middle of the sixth century, B.C., Croesus received some very uncomfortable news. That was that the Persians under a man named Cyrus had begun a campaign of conquest. Well, of course, we know that the book of Daniel told us that the Babylonian Empire would fall under the combined strength of the military power of the Medo-Persian Empire. Indeed, this was the beginning of the fall of the Babylonian control, and of the replacement by the Persians. Croesus decided that this was a threat to him and to his city of Sardis, so he decided to engage in a preventative war against the upstart Cyrus. However, Croesus wanted to play it safe, so he consulted the Oracle of Delphi as to what would be the result of his campaign.

The Oracle of Delphi was one of several places that people of the ancient world went in order to consult with the spirit world, in effect. That's exactly what they did. And they did get messages. The Oracle of Delphi was a demonic expression. They actually did get communications from the demonic world. They actually did get communications from the spirit world. Well, the spirit world (the Oracle of Delphi) told him that if he crossed the Halys River, which was the frontier of Croesus's Lydia empire, that an empire would be destroyed. If he crossed the river frontier, an empire would be destroyed. Croesus said, "Hot dog. That's all I wanted to know." He got on his way, and set the campaign in motion. Unfortunately, he didn't ask the Oracle which empire it was that they were referring to that was going to be destroyed. And as he very quickly discovered, it wasn't the empire of Cyrus, but rather his own empire that was under the gun.

Well, the attack ended in disaster for Croesus. He retreated back up through the valley, barreled up to the corridor leading up to the land bridge, and isolated himself back up there on the top in Sardis, and he began planning a new operation – a counter move to finish off Cyrus and to raise a new army.

Well, in the meantime, while he was doing that, one of Cyrus's men sees a Lydian drop a helmet down the side. He's watching this soldier, and he sees this guy come over the side, and pick his way hanging on to the wall, and pick up that helmet, and go back up. He went to Cyrus and he said, "I think I know a way to get up there. They think this is an impregnable side on three sides. They have no defense there. The only place they're watching is the bridge. Let's pull a night attack. I think we can climb up." And that's what they did. The cliff had worn down sufficiently that there were hand holds and footholds. One by one, they made their way to the top. Sardis fell, and Croesus was killed.

In time, Alexander the Great, with the Greek Empire, replaced the Persian Empire, and He took control of Sardis. In 133 B.C., it passed under the control of the fourth world empire that Daniel had predicted – the empire of the Romans.

So, when Sardis came into New Testament history, it came into that history with all of this background, and it was sort of a stamp upon this city in the minds of people of a place that was arrogant and that was complacent. Sardis had a reputation of great glory because of the fantastic wealth that it had possessed, but in reality, it was a place of ruin and of weakness.

Sardis, at the time that John was writing this letter, was a major center of the Babylonian mystery worship which we have been studying. And here in Sardis, you can, on the site of Sardis today, see the remains of the magnificent Temple of Artemus. The Temple of Artemus was one of the great Babylonian mystery religious worship places of the ancient world. Interestingly enough, they have found, built right against this temple wall, a Christian church. This almost signifies how the church, like a barnacle, had attached itself and taken over and conquered eventually this site of pagan worship.

The city in New Testament times, was known for its wickedness and for its immoral lifestyle. Its worship, of course, at the Temple of Artemus, centered on licentious acts. It worshiped the mother goddess Sybil, which was another variation of the Babylonian mother-and-child cult. Sardis was just a place that you could only describe by the word "filthy." It was a people who had degenerated from any moral principles whatsoever.

**The Church at Sardis**

Within such an atmosphere, a local church arose of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who were a lighthouse who were ministering the truth of God. The Lord Jesus Christ is now writing a letter to this church, and we're going to see the situation that had developed in that local congregation with the city of evil that surrounded them, and with the background that this city had.

"Unto the messenger of the local church in the city of Sardis, write these things says." "These things" refers to what follows now. The word "says" is the word "lego." "Lego" is the word that emphasizes the content of the message rather than the words. It's in the present tense which indicates that Jesus Christ always says this. It's active, meaning that He does the speaking. It's in the indicative mood which means we have a statement of fact. The one who is going to say these things which follow is identified as the one who has something. The word "has" is the Greek word "echo," the word for "possession." Again, it's present tense. Jesus Christ continually possesses this. It's active. He does the possessing, and it's a participle – a statement of principles.

**The Seven Spirits of God**

What He possesses is called "seven Spirits." The word "seven" is this preposition "hepta" which means "seven." The word "Spirits" that you're acquainted with is "pneuma." This is the noun for a non-corporeal being. It's the spirit which belongs to "theos;" that is, to God. The one who addresses them is the one who possesses the seven Spirits of God. What does that mean? Well, those of you who can remember back to Revelation 1:4 will remember that we've already met that very phrase. In Revelation 1:4, we read, "John, to the seven churches which are in Asia. Grace be unto you, and peace from Him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne.

A clue to what is meant by "seven Spirits" is found in Isaiah 11:2, where these seven Spirits are identified for us by the prophet Isaiah. This identifies the seven spirits as: "And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him." This is speaking about Jesus Christ when He rules in the tribulation. The Spirit of the Lord or the Spirit of Jehovah is what it is saying. You can see that it is, "The Spirit of the LORD;" that is, with the word "LORD" being spelled with all capital letters. Those are the four Hebrew letters called the sacred Tetragrammaton which is the highest name of God. It is referring to Jehovah, the God related to Israel. It is the Spirit of the LORD. So, in other words, it is referring to:

1. Deity –Jesus Christ is going to be characterized by the Spirit of deity. He will be dealt with by the Spirit of deity.
2. There will rest upon Him the Spirit of wisdom.
3. The Spirit of understanding
4. The Spirit of counsel
5. The Spirit of might
6. The Spirit of knowledge
7. The fear of the Lord – or we would say "reverence." The fear of the Lord is reverence or respect.

So, here are the sevenfold Spirits which will rest upon Jesus Christ. And it is the Spirit of God. It is God the Holy Spirit. That's what is referred to by this seven-Spirit concept. It is God the Holy Spirit: deity; wisdom; understanding; counsel; might; knowledge; and, reverence. These are the qualities that are particularly outstanding about the Spirit of God and which will rest upon Jesus Christ as a human being, and which consequently, rest upon us as well. Jesus Christ is so described as possessing this fullness of the Holy Spirit when He reigns during the millennium.

**The Number Seven**

The significant thing of this is this number seven. We won't pursue this now, but we will just remind you that numbers in the Bible have a significant meaning. And seven is a number that is the number of fullness of completion. Some people have made a study of the original Hebrew and Greek texts, and they have come up with an amazing, fantastic number of sevens just in the very text itself. I don't want to suggest too much significance to this, but I must confess that I'm impressed when you read the Hebrew of Genesis 1:1. There are seven words in that first verse in Hebrew, almost as if God himself was making a signature under the words. If you add up all of the letters in that first verse in Hebrew, it's a multiple of seven. If you take the three main words of "God;" "heaven;" and, "earth" that are in that verse, it comes out to a multiple seven. There are all kinds of combinations in how you can put that together. If you take the middle word "et" (a word that indicates a direct object), and you take the word on one side of it and add it together, you have seven letters taken. If you take the word on the other side it and add it together, you have seven letters. There are all kinds of ways you discover that there are sevens just in the Hebrew language in various combinations.

Now, that's only interesting because if you were to sit down and try to write something like that, it would be very hard to do. It would be very hard for you to write something that made sense; that was a dramatic statement; and, that combined this kind of a combination of a number that could be seen again and again. It is the number of perfection. If you find how many times this happens in the Bible, just in the language of the Greek and the Hebrew, you can see that this is hardly an accident. There must have been a supernatural wisdom of God – a fantastic omniscient computer mentality that was directing these men as they wrote, such that they could come up with sentences, that the very language (just the language itself – the physical language) created this emphasis upon the number seven. So, this number seven is a significant number. It tells us that we're talking about somebody who is a perfect being, and that is the perfection of God the Holy Spirit.

**The Protestant Reformation**

Along with it, it uses the word "and" again – "kai," indicating addition, then he uses the word "hepta" ("seven") again, and this time, he uses the "stars" ("aster"). "Aster" is the noun for "stars." We have found that this refers to Revelation 1:16 and Revelation 1:20 that told us that these stars refer to the pastor-teacher of these churches. Here, Jesus Christ is approaching a church – a church which existed in Asia Minor at this time which represented a certain stage of church history where a certain condition was going to develop. The condition that we are looking is the condition of the Reformation period – the Protestant Reformation, and what followed after the Protestant Reformation. Briefly, here's the picture. We'll get into this more later.

**The Apostle's Creed**

The Protestant Reformation made a swing back to the Word of God, and the orthodoxy of Scripture came to the forefront. Once they received the orthodoxy, they established statements of creeds. These statements of creeds expressed what they believed, and the creed then became the crystallized form of their Christian life. And there was hardly anything more that was necessary than for you to get up and recite the creed. Many churches would not think of having a service without getting up and reciting the Apostles' Creed. And that was the extent of your relationship to this God. And, gradually, Protestantism became a cold, dead orthodoxy.

**Beefeaters**

When Mrs. Danish and I were in London a few weeks ago, we went to the Tower of London and we spent most of the day at this very famous place which has been the site of the execution of a great number of English royalty. We just happened to be there near the end of the day, and they announced that there was going to be a vesper service in the chapel. This is a very famous chapel. We decided, "Well, we'll end our tour there." We swung by, and went into the chapel. The service was conducted by the military chaplain. There were men who are dressed in those funny costumes, and they're called Beefeaters. Some of you have seen pictures of the Beefeaters there – the men who run the tours. They are all ex-noncommissioned officers out of the British military service.

So, one of the Beefeaters got up; he read the Scripture; and, the service began. They had a choir. They were nicely robed. There were just a handful of them, but, boy, could they sing? All of them could sing. It was the Church of England, and it went through a Church-of-England service. It went through an order of service. It was all in a very cut-and-dried fashion. You sat there and listened to this choir singing these dramatic church hymns; you listened to the reading of the Scripture in those mellifluous British accents; and, you listened to the prayers as they turned to the altar and read them. Then, at certain points, everybody in the chapel knelt on the kneelers; then they stood; then they knelt again; then they sat; and, then they stood. Then we sang. I didn't do too much kneeling. I did a lot of standing and singing. But the whole service was that. Yet you could not fault anything you heard.

**A Dead Church**

Yet through that came orthodoxy that was dead. That is the Sardis church. Everything was just as right as it could be, and the surroundings were very impressive. You knew that you were sitting in a chapel which had been the final site, and in some respects, the final resting place of some of the great royalty of England. Therefore, it was an impressive place. They had one fellow buried up there that had been executed. They had executed him by taking him outside of the tower confines up to hill (they call it Execution Hill or something like that) where they would have the block, and they would come down with the blade, and they would chop the head off. And after they executed, somebody said, "Do you realize that we've never had a portrait made of him?" This was unthinkable that royalty should be executed, and not have a portrait.

So they called in the physician and had him sew the head back on the body. Then they propped him off in his finery. They called the artist in, and they told him, "Get a picture of him." I think they had to draw it in 24 hours straight. But they got a portrait made of this particular royal personage. But everybody who has seen the picture felt that it wasn't a very good likeness. He seemed rather pale and drawn. But nevertheless, he has one of the rare privileges of having been buried with his head attached to his body. And I think they have had him buried up there under the altar.

But in any case, there was this impressive place where you knew history had really been made. And there was ... this music, and there were these verses of Scripture, and these theologically sound prayers, but it was dead. What was missing? The thing that was missing at the core and the heart of it was God the Holy Spirit. That's what had happened to Protestantism. For we were sitting in the presence of the state church. You have to belong to the Church of England in order to rule. You could not be in the royal family, for example, and not be a member of the Church of England, and exceed to the throne. That church, which is the state church, and which all the important and prominent people belong to, is a church that, while in orthodoxy may be sound, yet in personal Christian relationship to Jesus Christ is very cold and very empty.

**God the Holy Spirit**

The key role was God the Holy Spirit. That is why, to this church which represents that kind of a condition in Christianity, the Lord Jesus Christ presents Himself as the one who possesses the fullness of God the Holy Spirit – the seven Spirits of God. The key role in the Christian life and in Christian service is God the Holy Spirit. He is the administrator of the Godhead. He runs things. Christians are forever trying to execute the Great Commission without knowing how to work through the divine administrator.

Yet this is the most neglected person of the Godhead. He's the most distorted member of the Trinity. People know about God the Father; they know about God the Son; but, they don't know much about God the Holy Spirit. They refer to Him as "it" instead of as "Him." They are so unclear about "Him."

I heard a man on the radio where a charismatic had called in, and the speaker had said something about what God the Holy Spirit would do. The speaker came in and said, "Yes, you're talking about God the Holy Spirit, but what I'm talking about is what God the Holy Ghost does. That's what I'm talking about." The speaker said, "What's the matter with you, man? You don't know that that's the same person?" Now, he didn't. Here was a person that was so ignorant, even of words, that he didn't even know that he was talking about the same person.

**The History of the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit**

The history of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, consequently, is a history of great importance and of great struggle against Satan. When God the Holy Spirit is free to do His work, then the forces of hell are brought to a standstill. They're neutralized. Satan and his forces are stopped dead in the angelic conflict. When a church does not function, and when individual believers do not function under a relationship where God the Holy Spirit is the administrator in their lives and in what they do, they are zeros in the Christian life.

I just want you to look at the last part of that first verse – the description of this church: "I know your works (oh, this is a hotshot organization), that you have a name that you live, and are dead." How many churches do you know who have a reputation that they are a real live-wire place? They've got a wonderful social program. They have lots of things for kids. They have a lot of wonderful activities, and a lot of wonderful programs.

I met a young man the other day that used to be here in the Berean ministry. I was sad when I met him – his long hair, and his sloppy look. He was here when he was a kid. His parents decided that Berean Church did not have enough social activities for the youth. They had too much Bible doctrine, so they pulled him out. He was one of the most promising kids we had. He had great potential; he was smart; and, he was sharp, and he stood in that foyer recently, and he looked like a slob. I always wanted to weep over him. His parents had given him a lot of social activity, and they denied him the thing that he needed, which was the core of life, which is the doctrine of the Word of God, which only God the Holy Spirit could make clear to him. God the Holy Spirit is not going to make anything clear to you in the form of doctrine unless you've got it. God the Holy Spirit is not going to do anything for you in the form of doctrine you may have if you don't know how to relate yourself to Him. *The most important thing for you and me as Christians is to be rightly related to God the Holy Spirit.*

These is another way of looking at that position on a sliding scale. At the top, you have super grace living, and at the bottom is animal living. Spiritual maturity is determined by how far up you are, or how far down you are. Negative volition is taking you down. Positive volition toward the Word of God is taking you up. The more negative you are, the more animal-like you become. The more positive you are, the more godlike you become. The same thing is applicable in terms of the power of the Holy Spirit. The more you are under the power of the Holy Spirit, the more you're going toward super grace living. The more you're under the power of the flesh, the more you're going down to the animal level. It's a beautiful picture. It never fails. It always works this way. If you are denied an understanding of how to relate yourself to God the Holy Spirit, then you haven't gone anywhere.

This is what was missed in the Reformation. Oh, the Reformation put the noose around the Pope's throat, and jerked him up, and stopped him short. And there was that dramatic moment when the Pope finally wrote out his official document and excommunicated Martin Luther because he had declared that the authority of the Pope was not above the authority of the Scriptures. The Scriptures were supreme authority. That document that the pope signed in Roman Catholic circles is called "The Papal Bull." Martin Luther recognized it for exactly that. Consequently, he took it, and had a big burning ceremony out in the courtyard, and he took the official document, and he burned it. So much for The Papal Bull which had declared that the authority of counsel and priests and Cardinals and the Pope was above that of Scripture. The Reformation caught the understanding of the authority of the Word of God. It caught the understanding of the doctrine of salvation.

However, do you know what they missed? The reformers never got hold of the place of God the Holy Spirit. They never got hold, really, of the place of God the Holy Spirit in the individual believer's life. The result was that they had the orthodoxy (they had the doctrines) right, but the lifestyle turned into coldness.

We have vast denominations today who are exactly in that position – a lifestyle of coldness. They have a lifestyle of great religious activity. There are churches that are viewed as the biggest hotshot places in town, but they're the churches that have orthodoxy without personal relationship to Jesus Christ.

In time, this lack of control by God the Holy Spirit resulted in the churches becoming liberal. That's where liberalism came from in Christianity. It was the final outgrowth of the fact that the Protestant churches had missed the point of the doctrine of God the Holy Spirit. When they blew that, they blew it all. The devil always knows how to get in at a critical point, and to clamp off and stifle the work of the Lord.

In time, we had a group of people over in Plymouth, England who met together. They started a whole movement back to the Scriptures – Bible study. They referred to them as the Plymouth Brethren. One of the great things that they uncovered was this doctrine that was neglected in the Reformation – the doctrine of the place of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Out of that came all the great revelation concerning prophecy. Do you realize that up to 200 years ago, hardly anybody talked about prophecy? They didn't have much to say about prophecy. You are the recent inheritors of this fantastic revelation. That's one area that the reformers were completely foul up on. But here came the revelation of God the Holy Spirit, and along with it, the understanding of where history is moving.

So, what happened? 200 years ago also began that gradual forming of the link-after-link of the satanic chain that has resulted today in the charismatic Pentecostal movement which has again destroyed the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. It has completely distorted it. It has completely twisted it into a monstrous lie, so that God the Holy Spirit cannot even work in the lives of millions of so-called charismatic Christians who are praising the Holy Spirit and calling upon Him because they are anchored to an emotion of the devil instead of the emotion of the Spirit. They are not filled with the Spirit of God. They are filled with their own human carnality spirit. If you don't respect his majesty the devil, maybe that's the only thing you need to learn today. He is subtle; he is tricky; and, he is extremely dangerous. If you do not know doctrine in a hardcore solid way that you can stand on it, you're going to be an emotional yo-yo that he's going to play up and down, and he's going to destroy, as he has for these people that he has sent out chasing rabbits for some spiritual gifts that don't exist, and chasing delusions of serving the Lord that are serving, in fact, the devil.

What a shock they will have when they get to heaven and discover that the rewards they expected are never going to be there. The history of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit has been a history of resistance against the devil, and of hammering out, step-by-step and piece-by-piece, this understanding of this third person of the Trinity who is the key person in this age of grace?

In the next session, we're going to go back to the earliest days. We're going to start back in the year 150 A.D., and we're going to take you through the centuries and show you the battle for the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. This is what was missed in the reformation that caused the conditions that we're going to find in this Sardis church. This is the doctrine which has been torn and distorted by the Pentecostals and charismatics, so that, again, we're back to square one (to zero) with most really born again Christian people who will never have a chance because they've missed this doctrine.

That is what John means when he records the words of the Lord, when he speaks about the seven Spirits of God – the complete and fullness of the power and person of God the Holy Spirit. Next time, we'll review that history, and we'll review a summary of where this person fits into your life and into the age of grace.

If today, in the providence of God, you may have been led here, and you are in the condition of the teacher whose application I received in answer to the question of "Are you a Christian?" If you have to say in all honesty, "Uncertain," then you are without hope and you are without Christ, and you are outside of the family of God. And God the Holy Spirit has very graciously been provided by Almighty God to fill a gap in your soul. You are spiritually dead. You have a physical body that's alive; you have a soul that's alive; but, but you have a spirit that lies there in complete death. Therefore, you cannot approach God. Without a living human spirit, you can't even move toward salvation. For that reason, God the Holy Spirit has been provided for you to override that problem. One of the great things that Jesus revealed in the upper room discourse, that is recorded for us in John 16, was that He would send God the Holy Spirit to make clear to a lost human being the essentials of the gospel and of what it took to be saved. You cannot make that approach. You cannot understand your need until God the Holy Spirit does it for you. He has to override. He has to substitute for your dead human spirit.

The gospel is a simple story. Because you need absolute righteousness to go to heaven, Jesus Christ had to take your place in death so that the justice of God could be satisfied – all sin paid for. And now, to you may be imputed the character of Christ – the absolute righteousness of Jesus Christ. I would be a great deceiver if I were to say, "If you would you like to receive this salvation, please raise your hand." You'll never get it that way. I would be a great deceiver if I were to say, "If you want this salvation, walk down this aisle." You'll never get it that way. Or if you were to promise to live a better life, you'll never get it that way. Anything you can do, you'll never get it that way. The only way you'll get it is by saying, "God, I accept it. I thank you for it."

If you are in that condition without Christ, and therefore without hope, and knowing that if your eyes do close in death with a dead human spirit within you that you will go to hell for all eternity, we urge you to receive Jesus Christ. In that moment of your acceptance, God's absolute righteousness will be credited to your account. And from that point, you will be down here at the baby stage of spiritual existence with animal concepts of human viewpoint controlling your thinking. But then you will have a living human spirit. And from that point on, with the Word of God, you'll start making a progress upward toward the image and likeness of God, which is what you're supposed to be. That's the kind of a person you are destined to be. It is up to you to accept or reject.

He who knew no sin became sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. Whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. It's a matter of belief. It's a matter of acceptance. It's a matter of trusting in what God is provided.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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