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

RV29-02***

We are looking at the fifth letter to the church in Sardis. The first verse we read said, "'And unto the angel of the church in Sardis, write these things,' said He that has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars." We have indicated that the seven Spirits indicate a complete and perfect concept, and actually refers to God the Holy Spirit. This doctrine concerning the person of God the Holy Spirit is one that, over the centuries, Satan has done his best to keep confused and to constantly distort, because in the church, He is the key personality. If you are not rightly related as a Christian to God the Holy Spirit, it is impossible for you to progress in the Christian life to any degree whatsoever. It is impossible to store treasures in heaven. It is impossible to pray effectively. The whole concept of Christian living comes to a screeching halt.

**Montanism**

So, it's no wonder that this would be an area that Satan would seek to bring under confusion. The historical condition went something like this. About the year 150 A.D., a distortion came along called Montanism. Montanus was a religious leader who teamed up with two women. They claimed to be prophets of a new age of divine revelations from God the Holy Spirit in addition to the Bible. This is one of the first misconceptions that Satan has tried to impose upon believers. This is the same misconception that is in Islam today – that they have new revelation from God in the form of the Koran. This is the same misconception which is incorporated in the Roman Catholic Church – that they have additional revelation and the apocryphal books. This the same misconception that is involved in Mormonism with the new revelation of the book of Mormon. This is an old, old technique. Right at the very beginning of the Christian era came along this concept under Montanus that God the Holy Spirit was giving certain individuals new prophetic insights.

Montanus announced the nearness of the end of the world, and one of the things that made him attractive in his teaching was that he called for a very high moral standard of living. This was a reaction on his part against the developing formalism (the ritualism) in the organized church which is amply portrayed to us here in the letter to Sardis, where religion became a matter of sound orthodoxy; religious rituals; and, procedures so that the thing was simply going through the numbers through emotions. What Montanus and his followers were seeking was a closer personal relationship to Jesus Christ, and they were on the right track – that this was through God the Holy Spirit. But they distorted the concept of how God speaks to us today in the idea that He spoke to them directly, and thus gave them new revelation. Christians in this time simply rejected this whole concept. Montanism was rejected. The Christians rightly concluded that God the Holy Spirit does not give new revelations in addition to Scripture. Montanism was rejected.

**Sabellianism**

In about 215 A.D, another step was made relative to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. It was called Sabellianism. This was a view that evolved from another concept called Monarchianism. Monarchianism taught that the Son was not a separate person, but another mode of expression of the Father. Thus, the idea was that the person on the cross was God the Father. That's called Patripassianism – the Father experienced this death. Sabellius came along, and he built on this idea of Monarchianism – that the Son was not a separate person, but that there is actually one God, and He was on the throne. Sabellius built on this concept with the teaching that God is a unity, and He reveals himself in three modes. One of those modes is God the Holy Spirit. Here it was 215 A.D., and the Christian church had to decide: "Is this man right, or is this man wrong? Is this the truth about God the Holy Spirit? Is there one God who sometimes appears as the Father; sometimes as the Son; and, sometimes as the Holy Spirit?

Well, this particular error about the Holy Spirit gained a very large following among those who were zealous to preserve the concept of monotheism. However, again, the Scriptures demonstrate that this is a false evaluation and a false concept of the Holy Spirit, for the persons of the Trinity are never mixed. They are always distinctively treated as individuals, and in such cases as, for example, the baptism of Jesus Christ, it's obvious that they're all there: the Son is being baptized; the Father is speaking from heaven; and, God the Holy Spirit is descending in the form of a dove upon Jesus Christ. The essence of deity is one, but the persons are three.

**Arianism**

In the year 325 A.D., another action relative to this evolving of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit developed, and this was called Arianism. Arius was a presbyter or a religious leader in Alexandria. He also built on this monotheistic principle of Monarchianism. Arius taught that there was one eternal God who then generated the Son, who had thus a beginning as deity. So, now you had God the Father, still holding to that misconception of monotheism – a distorted one-God concept. But from that Father, there was generated this Son who then came into being as deity. So, Jesus Christ was not eternal, but he had a beginning as deity. Then Arius taught that the first thing that Jesus Christ the Son created was God the Holy Spirit. So here you have the Father who generates the Son, and the Son then creates the Holy Spirit.

**The Council of Nicaea – The Deity of the Holy Spirit**

Well, a church council was held in the city of Nicaea in 325 A.D.; researched the Scriptures; and, hammered out the doctrine which declared that the Son was eternal, and He was of the same substance as the Father, and that the Son was not generated from the father: They were both eternal. The Nicene Creed declared the belief in the Holy Spirit along with the Father and Son; thus, implying the deity of the Holy Spirit.

**Athanasius**

The man who stood against Arius was that famous Christian whose name was Athanasius. We've heard of him before. He was the one who effectively opposed Arius, and he declared that the Holy Spirit was of the same essence as the Father, and his view prevailed at the Council of Nicaea. So, at that council in 325 A.D., the false view of the Holy Spirit that Satan was trying to impose was completely defeated. The concept that God the Father generated the Son who then generated the Holy Spirit was completely defeated. The Nicene Creed made it very clear that all three persons were equal in the Godhead.

**The Council at Constantinople – The Holy Spirit Proceeds from the Father**

Then, moving on to the year 381 A.D., there was the council at Constantinople. These are these great church councils. At this council, a man named Macedonius, who was the bishop of Constantinople, taught that the Holy Spirit was a created creature who was subordinate to the Son. His party were called the Macedonians, and they were also call the Pneumatomachians. Pneumatomachians means "evil speakers against the Spirit." The ruler of the Roman Empire, Emperor Theodosius, called the church council to discuss this question, the teaching of the Macedonians, which was receiving wide acceptance – that the Son had created the Holy Spirit. He called the church council in 381 A.D. of the Eastern Church leaders. They concluded a statement which they put in these words: "And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the life-giving, who proceeds from the Father, who is to be glorified with the Father and the Son, and who speaks through the prophets."

The problem that these men faced, in researching Scripture and seeing what the Bible taught about God the Holy Spirit, was that they were talking about things that dealt with deity, but you cannot always convey these ideas in human language. So, they stuck as close as they could to the original language of the Scriptures, and tried to convey these concepts through the very words that God the Holy Spirit had inspired the writers to use. So they settled the question of the deity of the Holy Spirit, though they did not actually declare it. So, in the summary, they described the Holy Spirit in such a way that there was no question that He was deity, and therefore could not have been created by the Son. The thing that they did not do, however, was to define what relationship the Holy Spirit had to the Father and to the Son. So, the Council of Constantinople in 381 established the fact that God the Holy Spirit is indeed deity. That was the critical thing to establish at this point. Therefore, He could not have been one who was created by the Son.

**Augustine**

Then we come to a period in history from 354 A.D. to about 430 A.D., when one of the all-time greats of Christian theology showed up on the scene of human history – the famous Augustine. Augustine produce the doctrine of grace, and this led him to a study of the Holy Spirit, whose power was essential in the life of a believer. He settled the doctrine of the Holy Spirit relative to the Western church.

By this time, the Roman Empire had split into two factions. The headquarters of one faction, the eastern part of the empire, was at Constantinople. The headquarters of the western part was now at Rome. Augustine wrote a book called De Trinitate, in which he taught that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit all possess the entire divine essence, and each is interdependent on the other members of the Godhead. This was a great step forward in establishing the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. This is one place where Satan was greatly confounded – in the proclamations and the studies that Augustine's brilliant mind brought forth on this doctrine. Augustine used the words of Scripture and declared that the Holy Spirit *proceeds* from the Father and the Son. The significance of that word is that "proceeds" indicates not inferiority, but just a place of subordination. It indicates a place of relationship. It indicates that within the Godhead, there is an order of authority. There are lines of authority that is in the Godhead itself. It is the Father to the authority of the Son, to the authority of the Holy Spirit. That's how it works in the Godhead. That's why, in the United States today, the key problem of our society is authority. It's all summed up in that one word. That is where everything is broken down. It is the rejection of lines of authority, and that violates the very nature of God himself.

**Efficacious Grace**

One of the things that Augustine thought was what we theologically call efficacious grace on the part of God the Holy Spirit. This is the work of God the Holy Spirit when he moves upon a human being, who is a lost sinner, and brings that sinner under conviction and awareness of his sin, and that grace is such that it carries him right into salvation. It's efficacious. It not only brings him under conviction, but because the person is elected to eternal life, it carries them right on through into that eternal life.

Augustine rightly taught that the Holy Spirit must move the will of the unbeliever to accept Christ as Savior. Paul made it very clear: "There is none righteous. No, not one. There is none that seeks after God. No, not one." You may remember back in the early part of the book of Romans, we studied those verses. Nobody in the world who is born again and headed for heaven at this moment did that because he decided to be born again. There is nobody here that is saved because you decided you wanted to be saved. If you had been left to yourself; if you had been left to your lost condition; and, if you had been left in that darkened condition, and God had stepped back and not touched you in any way, you'd still be headed for hell. There is not a person who makes a step toward God unless God the Holy Spirit comes in and creates a drawing magnetic work upon that person's thinking toward Jesus Christ. If you want a person to be born again, then you pray for him that God the Holy Spirit would perform His drawing power. That's the way to pray for unbelievers. You pray that God the Holy Spirit would perform His supernatural work of drawing that person to Christ. Until that is done, that person will never be born again. No matter how much you plead with him; no matter how much gospel you explain; no matter how sincere you are; and, no matter how distressed you are over it, it will make no difference.

**Pelagius**

This concept was opposed by a gentleman named Pelagius. Pelagius denied that Adam's sin had contaminated the human will. He taught that man was able to produce divine good (merit that God would accept) apart from the Holy Spirit enablement. So, a man, a woman, a boy, or a girl could choose to be saved without any influence by God the Holy Spirit. The will was free. Pelagius was a staunch opponent of Augustine.

**The Council at Ephesus – Efficacious Grace**

In 431 A.D., the church council met in the city of Ephesus. At the Council of Ephesus, they hammered out this particular issue about the Holy Spirit: the Augustine idea that God the Holy Spirit must draw one to salvation before he will accept Christ; and, the Pelagius idea that a person can do that on his own without any work of God the Holy Spirit to prepare him. The counsel of Ephesus condemned the view of Pelagius as being unscriptural, and they declared the necessity of the Holy Spirit upon an unbeliever's heart to enable that person to receive Christ in salvation.

**The Council at Chalcedon – Deity**

Well, things moved along to the year 451, and another church council was held. This time it was at Chalcedon. Chalcedon represented the ecclesiastical authorities of Rome, Constantinople, Antioch, and Jerusalem – the great religious centers of the time. They confirmed the decisions of the Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople. So, the doctrine of the deity of God the Holy Spirit was now firmly established with this council. They reviewed and they confirmed that indeed God the Holy Spirit was deity; that He was a separate person from the Father and the Son; that He proceeded from the Father and the Son; and, that He was absolutely essential as the moving factor to draw an unbeliever to Christ for salvation by grace.

**The Council at Toledo – Eternal Generation**

In the year 589 A.D., there was another council held at Toledo (not in Ohio, but over in the old world). This council dealt with the question that had been left hanging fire over the centuries. Just exactly what is the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the Father and to the Son? In the Western church, this became quite an issue. What was the relationship of Jesus Christ the Son to the Father? Well, the relationship was called "generation," because, again, they resorted very wisely to the Greek language. And this is how this is described. They added the word "eternal." The Son is related to the Father by eternal generation. The Father has eternally generated the Son. Do you know what that means? No, I don't either. It's the closest that you can put in human terms (what we can understand) of a divine relationship. Again, what is the point of this? Simply to show you lines of authority. The Father directs the Son. That is a line of authority. As you generated your child, we can understand that in human terms. Therefore, you are in superior authority over your child because he has been generated by you. So, these scriptural terms were used by the council to describe the relationship of the Father to the Son.

**Procession**

That still leaves us hanging fire as to what the relationship was of the Son and the Father to the Holy Spirit: that, which is this condition of authority down from the Father to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. This was described as "procession," which again, was a biblical word; that is, the Bible taught that God the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son. This is again an attempt to describe lines of authority. It in no way refers to inferiority on the part of the Holy Spirit.

The question arose as to whether the procession was from both the Father and the Son, or just from the Father alone. These may seem like modest, insignificant questions, but ultimately they were very serious theological questions, and it would have been nice if you could have opened to a page in the Bible and had all this summary doctrine all put together for you, so that all of these questions were answered, but that isn't the way the Bible is written. Revelation and principles are given, and you have to bring it all together until you can hammer out a doctrine. That's what these people were doing in these early centuries.

They concluded that logic demanded that the Holy Spirit had to proceed from the Father and from the Son because Father and Son are one. If there is anything that Jesus Christ made clear, it was, "I and the Father are One." So, they concluded that what proceeded from the Father had to proceed from the Son. These are logical conclusions. They can't just point to a verse in the Bible and say, "This is the way it is."

**The Filioque Clause**

So the Western theologians added what is called the "filioque clause" to the creed that was established at Constantinople. That clause said that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and from the Son. This created a frap in the church because the theologians of the Eastern Church did not like the filioque clause. "Filioque" means the Son clause – that the Holy Spirit proceeded in lines of authority from the Father and from the Son. These Eastern theologians felt that this clause was suggesting that the Holy Spirit was in some way dependent on the Son, and that would bring into question the deity of the Holy Spirit. But that, of course, was not in the mind of these Western theologians, and they made that very clear. So, there was that difference between them, but the basic biblical concept that was accepted was the word "proceed" to describe the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the Father and to the Son so that you had these lines of authority within the Godhead.

**The Protestant Reformation**

You move along to the year 1517, and enlightenment breaks forth upon all humanity. We come to the Protestant Reformation. The Protestant Reformation rode along, basically, on what had been hammered out about the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the previous centuries. They really added very little beyond the statements of Augustine. They went back to Augustine, and they recognized that Augustine was on track. They basically went to the position that Augustine held of the work of the Holy Spirit, but that's as far as they went. Sadly enough, what they really did in the Reformation was that they ignored the Holy Spirit. Therein came the condition which is described in the church at Sardis. That is the very reason why Jesus Christ presents Himself to the church as the one who has the complete (the full) Holy Spirit. This was the thing that had brought the problem into the church and into the historical church at that time.

**Human Works**

During the dark ages of the Roman Catholic Church, the Catholics had de-emphasized the total depravity of man. The Catholics had emphasized the freewill, and they had made human works and the priesthood the channels to spiritual life. One of the fathers, like Augustine, of the Roman Catholic Church was Thomas Aquinas. Thomas Aquinas opened a real can of worms. He thought in a similar line to what Pelagius thought. Thomas Aquinas said, "Yes, man fell in Adam. Yes, man was contaminated in Adam, but not man's will. Man's will was not contaminated. Man's mind was not fully contaminated." Thomas Aquinas opened up the idea that, because man's mind had not been contaminated in the fall, man could think his way to God, and that man, through observing the world of nature, would come to exactly the same conclusions as there are in the Scriptures – the revelation of Scripture. And that's not true. The Bible makes it very clear that our minds are degenerate, and when our minds are left to themselves, they veer distinctly away from God's thoughts, and they do not come up with anything relative to what we find in Scripture.

The reformers came out of this kind of a background. They came out of this concept that man isn't all bad; that man can do something to please God; and, that man has a freewill that he can exercise. They did not realize, as Augustine had stressed, that it seems free to you, but without the movement of God the Holy Spirit directing you, that freewill is going nowhere.

So, the reformers moved from the research in Scripture on the person of the Holy Spirit to His work. Because they were interested in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, they stressed the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit more. The reformers taught the need of the Holy Spirit to illuminate the Scriptures. They did make that very clear – that no believer could understand the Bible if God the Holy Spirit did not illuminate his mind. And they rejected the Roman Catholic priesthood as the authority for interpreting the Word of God. They put the responsibility for what the Scriptures meant upon the individual priests of the individual believer.

The reformers stressed the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the believers also in terms of Christian service. They knew that they had to have the guidance and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to serve in a way that was compatible with the will of God. They did produce, in some respects, a well-balanced doctrine of the Holy Spirit as they had it up to that time in church history. Again, you've got the same problem that, while they produced a balanced doctrine, they ignored Him. That was the strange thing. That's what you have in the Sardis letter. You have orthodoxy. They hammered out the refinements, and then they acted as if those things were not true. They simply did not seem to be able to incorporate, into their experience as believers, what they had brought together finally after centuries of analysis of Scripture. They put the finishing touches on it, and then they missed the whole boat. They, in effect, ignored the Spirit of God while they had a very comparatively sound doctrine of the Holy Spirit as far as it went.

**The Socinians**

In the 16th century, we come upon two groups who affect the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. One is called Socinians, and the other is called the Arminians. The Socinians, in the 16th century, declared that the persons of the Trinity did not possess a single essence. They denied the preexistence of Jesus Christ. They denied the personality of the Holy Spirit. They said the Holy Spirit was not a person. He was just a virtue or an energy flowing out from God to man. They denied that Jesus Christ existed as deity before he had a human body.

**The Arminians**

The Arminians, also in the 16th century, replaced the Holy Spirit in salvation with the human will. They just went right on with this Pelagian concept of freewill, and that the will was not contaminated. Arminius came along, and he made regeneration entirely a work of man – with God not involved at all.

**The Synod of Dort**

This was condemned by the Synod of Dort, which was held in 1618 and 1619. This concept of Arminius was declared to be unscriptural and was condemned. They emphasized the doctrine of salvation by free grace through the work of the Holy Spirit.

**John Owen**

There was a Puritan writer whose name was John Owen. He lived from 1616 through 1683. He wrote a book called Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit. It's a classic even today. He brought together the best of the thinking concerning the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. This is a great work in developing the Reformation principles, and relating the Holy Spirit to the Christian life.

**Abraham Kuyper**

Another man that is worth mentioning was a man named Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920). He wrote a classic statement on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the face of the rising tide of theological liberalism which was taking place at that period of his life. It was called The Work of the Holy Spirit, and that was a very prominent and a very apropos statement at the time when liberalism was coming out of Germany and was attacking the Scriptures and attacking the work of the Spirit of God.

**Emanuel Swedenborg**

Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1722) came along. He denied the whole doctrine of the Trinity.

**Friedrich Schleiermacher**

Another German theologian was named Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1830). He denied the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ; he denied the cross; and, he denied the coming of the Holy Spirit. These were the whole concepts, that had been accepted and developed over the period of the centuries, that were now being denied by these German rationalists. They denied the personality of the Holy Spirit. They said the Holy Spirit's work was merely the spirit of a corporate life initiated by Jesus Christ (whatever that means).

**The Plymouth Brethren**

But the real forward motion was made by a splendid group of believers who met in Plymouth, England who have come down to us historically as the Plymouth Brethren. They began about 1825. This was simply a group of people who decided to study the Bible. That's not very long ago – less than 200 years ago. They just decided to study the Bible. When they got into Scriptures, lo and behold, they were amazed how the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, in the form in which it had come down over the centuries and how it had been crystallized in the Reformation, was a doctrine that was practically completely ignored in the lives and the experiences of Christians. And the result of its being ignored was that Christians were totally devoid of the concept of the church age.

**The Church is Different from Israel**

It was these Plymouth Brethren, sitting in small groups studying the Bible that said, "Hey, do you know what? There's a big difference between Israel and the church. The church is not Israel. Israel is one thing; God has a program for the Jew; that program has a beginning; it has a history; and, it has an end out here in eternity. God also has the church; it has a beginning on the day of Pentecost; it has a program; and, it has an ending out here in eternity. The Jew ends out there, and the Christian ends out there. These are two whole different programs. Israel and the church are not the same thing.

The reformers, because they just carried along the Roman Catholic viewpoint, took the attitude that Israel had violated its covenants with God, and it was such a sinful people that it had been rejected. And now God would never touch the Jew again. When you told these people who were in the Reform tradition that someday the Jew would again be a nation, they guffawed in your face. They said, "God was through with the Jew. The Jew is nothing. The church has taken the place of Israel." So they talked about things like the Christian Sabbath. You can't talk about the Christian Sabbath. Talking about the Christian Sabbath is about as bad as talking about a virgin prostitute. The two are totally incompatible. It's just dumb. The Sabbath is an Israelite, Jewish feature. It has nothing to do with Christianity or the church. The church is totally separate.

To you and me, that's easy, because we have been trained in the Scriptures in that tradition. But when you were back there, that was a bombshell of revelation, because it is God the Holy Spirit who is the key personality in the church age. He is the one who makes all the machinery work. He is the one who makes the Christian move to that image and likeness of God into super grace living. For centuries, this had been denied to people because they did not understand the difference between Israel and the church. They did not understand that the distinctives of the church as they are revealed in the epistles of the New Testament. The epistles of the New Testament were largely ignored because those epistles deal with the church. They present the distinctive features that are yours as a believer in Jesus Christ. They knew nothing about the priesthood of the believers. They knew nothing about the basic concepts of the functioning of grace. The result was that it was neither Jewish nor Christian. It was a hybrid mongrel thing, and that was exactly what the devil wanted.

So, when these people started studying the Bible, and they realized the distinctive work of God the Holy Spirit, they realized that for the first time in the history of mankind on the day of Pentecost, God the Holy Spirit baptized people into intimate union with Jesus Christ so that they were forever joined to the second person of the Trinity. Moses is not joined to Jesus Christ. Adam is not joined to Jesus Christ. Even great King David is not joined to Jesus Christ in an intimate, eternal union. But you are. Only the distinctive believers of the church age have that feature. Only the believers in the church age have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Constantly, 100% of the time, God indwells you and me as believers. That was never true of Moses. That was never true of David. As they began seeing these distinctives, they realized how important it was to understand the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and that the failure to understand that, resulted in the cold, sound orthodoxy, but dead spirituality.

**The Doctrine of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit**

So, these people developed the great doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit – a distinctive of the grace church age. And only God the Holy Spirit can unite a person to Christ in this way. They developed the doctrine of the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the body of Christ in distinction with Israel as a group in God's program. They stressed the key role of the Bible in the soul of the believer, and of the Holy Spirit in the illuminating and the learning of doctrine. That was a tremendous thing that hit the Plymouth Brethren. We can't learn the Bible if it wasn't for the instruction of God the Holy Spirit. He is the teacher. They stressed the role of the Holy Spirit in enabling the believer of the church age to live the supernatural lifestyle that he is called upon to live in the Bible. They finally realized why it was that Christians, over the centuries, had been called upon to live a supernatural lifestyle. In other words, Jesus Christ would say, "Love one another as I have loved you." That's sheer madness! What human beings can love one another as Christ has loved us. Obviously, only a human being through whom God is doing that. They suddenly understood where God the Holy Spirit had to fit into their experience, and, again, Satan was frustrated.

**Neo-Orthodoxy**

Well, as time moves along, the problems of the church faced a group called Neo-orthodoxy, which was really a liberal group. The 20th century movement of neo-orthodoxy was the result of the fact that the liberals (these German rationalists) had created a liberalism that had completely destroyed the Bible, and liberal churches were beginning to lose their members. People finally got fed up with the fact that there was nothing in the Bible that they could view as something that God had said. Therefore, they had no source of communication with God. It became less and less popular in liberal churches to even preach from the Bible. It became more and more popular to give book reports; to review movies; and, to speak about all kinds of things except to apply the teaching of Scripture, because they didn't know which part of the Bible was from God, and which was really man-created.

**Karl Barth**

Consequently, along came a man named Karl Barth, and in a reaction against liberalism, he came along with the concept that he called neo-orthodoxy. What Barth was striking against was the fact that the liberal had a very wonderful view (they had an optimistic view) of man: that man was good, that man was moving forward; that he was moving upward; and, that things were getting better. This was before the First World War. Well, along comes the First World War, and, oh boy, was that a shock to the new liberalism? But they managed to knuckle down; hunker over; and, survive that storm, but they no sooner got the ship stabilized again when along came World War II: with the atrocities of Nazi Germany: with the atrocities of the Japanese; and, with the brutality of humanity on the lowest conceivable level. The result was that liberalism took practically a death blow. Even their own people could no longer stand up and stomach listening to those preachers tell them that man was good, and everything was going up.

So, the result was that Barth came along and said, "Man is sinful; man is not good; and, man is not going upward." It sounded like: "Man, this guy is going back to the Bible," and he called it neo-orthodoxy. There were a lot of Christians who were fooled by this because he claimed to be returning to the Bible. But the thing about Karl Barth was that he still believed in a higher critical view of Scriptures. He still believed that the Bible was not supernaturally produced by God through human authors. He still believed that the Bible was just man's writing about man's religious experiences. He still believed that man's reason had to ferret out what was the Word of God and what was not. It was a very clever approach because suddenly people in liberal churches said, "Ah, now we have an authority from God again." But the authority they had was a Bible that was without inerrancy. It was a Bible that had mistakes in it. It was a Bible that man's reasoning had to analyze.

So, the result of neo-orthodoxy was, again, an attack upon the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. They denied the distinct personality of the Holy Spirit. They said this is just an "it." It's an activity of God. They had no deity for the Holy Spirit. He was only represented as a manifestation of some immaterial power of God. They basically held to the modalistic view of the Trinity.

**Neo-Liberalism**

Well, liberalism bounced back with neo-liberalism. The old liberalism had taken a bad turn, so they countered neo-orthodoxy with neo-liberalism. That's the old liberalism with the old beliefs, trying to bring out a counterattack against neo-orthodoxy, but now it was going to take sin more seriously. It was going to be less optimistic about man and about the world getting better. But again, neo-liberalism rejected the personality and the deity of the Holy Spirit; it called the Spirit of God an "it;" and, He was merely a function (a force) of power.

**The Pentecostal Charismatic Movement**

Then in our day, the most recent distortion of the doctrine of God the Holy Spirit is the Pentecostal charismatic movement. Interestingly enough, basically, they hold to the orthodox biblical doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Next time, I'll give you a summary of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as the Bible teaches, and, basically, the charismatic Pentecostal group would accept that.

Now the devil had a little bit of a problem. Here was a very devoted, powerful, large group of believers, and they believed in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the biblical sense. That was going to cause a lot of trouble. So, the devil produced that fantastic historical chain of events that began 200 years ago. If you have not studied the Berean studies on Paul's Preference of Celebrityship, I would encourage you to get those studies, and see how, 200 years ago, Satan began forming link-by-link the chain with which the charismatic Pentecostal movement is enslaved today. The core feature was to distort the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, particularly a false doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. When the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit was distorted, the groundwork was cut out again from under the church age. Satan had taken people right back to where they were before the Reformation.

So, here is a brief run down through the centuries of the problems that we as Christians faced with the doctrine of God the Holy Spirit, and the problems that Christians faced here as exemplified in the Sardis church. They had it all together. They even had the doctrine. But because they missed the point that this was the key person they must be related to in a right way, they lost it all.

**How we are Related to God the Holy Spirit**

How are we related to God to the Holy Spirit? God the Holy Spirit comes in and dwells you at the point of salvation. He never leaves you again. He baptizes you into the body of Christ. You are never separated from Him again. He seals you so that you are forever certain of eternal life. He seals you to eternal life – to salvation. He fills you. That's how you are related to Him. He fills you at every point that you are willing to let him control your life. The way that you permit Him to fill you is by confession of known sins. This is not a very difficult thing. This is not a thing that you should walk around and saying, "Now I wonder if there's anything I need to confess."

**Unconfessed Sins**

When I was in seminary, I used to work for a cotton gin company in Dallas, and there was a student in my seminary class that was extremely pietistic. One day I noticed he was down with his head in his locker (where you hang your clothes) on his knees. I asked him what he was doing. He said he was trying to search to be sure that he didn't have any unconfessed sins." I said, "If you have any unconfessed sins, the Lord is going to give it to you in the seat of your pants, and you won't have to kneel there to find out." That is the way God does it. You're not going to have to go around saying, "Oh, I wonder if I have anything to confess." God the Holy Spirit comes through. He does deal with a gentle hand. You can shove Him away, but He's going to tap you right away, and He's going to say, "That was wrong. You shouldn't have said that. That was an evil thought. You shouldn't have indulged that. That was a wicked thing you did. You should not have done that."

**Confession of Sin**

The thing to do is to keep short accounts with God the Spirit, and confess immediately. The result will be that you will be rightly related to the Spirit of God so that He will control you. To be filled with the spirit, which is the unique privilege of the church again, means to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. You are controlled when you admit to Him when you have stepped out of line. That means that you kids need to confess; that means that you teenagers need to confess; that means that you young people need to confess; and, that means you adults need to confess. The confession of sin is the key principle for being rightly related to the Spirit of God. 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." It has nothing to do with salvation. It has only to do with your fellowship; your daily walk; and, your daily empowerment by God the Holy Spirit. When that power is working, you'll discover it really is working. You'll discover that your life has guidance. You'll discover that your life is functioning in a way that is gratifying to yourself. You'll find that it's productive. You'll find that it is successful. But you won't have any ecstatics. There won't be any fireworks. There won't be any glint. You probably won't even say, "Praise the Lord." You'll just glow in the warmth and the joy of the God who loves you, and who leads you and makes you more powerful than any saint of the Old Testament ever dreamed he could be. That is God the Holy Spirit.

The Sardis church missed that while they had the sound doctrine on that point, and they lost it all. Be aware that you follow not in their footsteps.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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