

## Sabbath School Lesson #11 – Grieving and Resisting the Spirit – 11-17 Mar 2017

**C**hrist who breathed on His disciples saying, “Receive ye the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22), wants us to receive the same “Spirit of Christ” which was in all the prophets (1 Peter 1:11), because “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His” (Romans 8:9), which Spirit is Christ Himself, as “the Lord is that Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:17), for Christ being “the last Adam was made a quickening Spirit” (1 Corinthians 15:45) and “because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts” (Galatians 4:6), and for these reasons, let us have Christ; as Ellen White says, “It is not safe to catch the spirit from another. We want the Holy Spirit, which is Jesus Christ” {Lt66-1894 (April 10, 1894) par. 18}.

The memory text for this lesson reads: “And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4:30). This Spirit is not something we put on; it is put in the life when “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.”

We focus on section entitled ‘Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit’ – Mark 3:28-29; Matthew 12:31-32. We first read from Matthew: “But whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come” (verse 32). Some read into this verse a posthumous theory – grace beyond the grave, – which is subversive of the very foundation principles of the gospel of Christ. The advocates of this theory claim that the clause, “it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come,” teach probation after death, that ‘Christ would not say that a certain sin shall not be forgiven in the world to come, unless it is possible for some sins to be then forgiven.’

So far as the text in question is concerned, this matter may quickly be settled by reading the parallel text to determine the meaning of the expression in Matthew. Mark recorded it thus: “But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost *hath never forgiveness*, but is in danger of eternal damnation” (verse 29). The words “hath never forgiveness,” express the meaning exactly. One may say that this does not disprove posthumous – grace beyond the grave theory; but the clause, “is in danger of eternal damnation,” when rightly understood, shows that no posthumous is connected with the text. For all sin there is condemnation; whoever sins is condemned already. But this condemnation may not be lasting; if the guilty one accepts Christ, his condemnation may come to an end; for there is “no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” If, however, the sinner has committed the sin against the Holy Spirit, his condemnation is eternal; from it there is no possibility of escape. This is all that can be found in the text. In further proof of this, we have the simple statement made by Luke. He says, “But unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost *it shall not be forgiven him*” (Luke 12:10). This is just what the Saviour meant and all that He meant. He made an emphatic statement that the sin against the Holy Spirit should have no forgiveness; any attempt to make more out of His words is adding to the words of Inspiration. “Add thou not unto His words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar” (Proverbs 30:6).

There are just two other texts in the Bible, which are quoted to uphold the posthumous theory. These are 1 Peter 3:18-20; 4:6. These texts should receive careful consideration, especially the first, for, as perverted, it is made the foundation of many unscriptural theories. We will quote the text in full: “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit; by which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water” (1 Peter 3:18-20).

The simplest way to show what the text does not mean, is to show what it does mean. This we may do by a series of questions which will enable the reader himself to explain its meaning. Thus: 1) Who once suffered? *Answer* – “Christ also hath once suffered.” 2) For what did Christ suffer? *Answers* – “For sins.” 3) Why did He thus suffer? *Answer* – “That He might bring us to God.” 4) How did He suffer? *Answer* – “Being put to death in the flesh.” 5) By what was He quickened, or made alive? *Answer* – “Quickened [made alive] by the Spirit.” 6) What else did He do by the Spirit? *Answer* – “He went and preached unto the spirits in prison.” 7) Why were they in prison? *Answer* – They “sometime [once] were disobedient.” 8) When were they disobedient and in prison? *Answer* – “When once the longsuffering of God

waited in the days of Noah.” There is the whole matter stated in the words of Scripture, so plainly that the most obtuse could not fail to see it. These disobedient spirits were in prison in the days of Noah, and therefore it was at that time that the preaching was done to them.

Note the harmony between the above text and the text in Genesis 6:3. The above text says, that Christ, by the Spirit, went and preached to the spirits in prison, “When once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah.” This would imply that in the days of Noah, God had waited a long time for something. Now read Genesis 6:3: “And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh; yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.” Here we find that God’s longsuffering waited one hundred and twenty years, to give those wicked people a chance to repent. All that time Christ, by the Spirit, was preaching to them. Noah was the visible agent, but he was simply the mouthpiece, just as Paul says of all true preachers, we are “ambassadors for Christ,” saying to sinners, “We pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Here we might leave this subject, but someone will probably be questioning about the prison, and we may as well forestall the queries. By gross perversion of Scripture, it is assumed that this prison was *hades*, and that the preaching was done there. Keep in mind that these “spirits in prison” were disobedient. Now disobedience brings condemnation to death (Romans 6:23), and a man under sentence of death is always kept in prison. This is the idea conveyed by the psalmist when he says: “From Heaven did the Lord behold the earth; to hear the groaning of the prisoners; to loose those that are appointed to death” (Psalm 102:19-20). And the idea is still more forcibly expressed by the apostle, when he says that Christ took part of flesh and blood, “that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them, who *through fear of death* were all their lifetime *subject to bondage*” (Hebrews 2:14-15). Nothing but sin causes fear of death; hence the text teaches emphatically that sin makes men “subject to bondage.” It is the especial mission of Christ to save people from sin (Matthew 1:21), and consequently to release them from prison – from the prison of sin. For proof of this read the following texts:

Isaiah 61:1: “The spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.”

Isaiah 42:1-7: “Behold My servant, whom I uphold; Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth; I have put My Spirit upon Him; ... to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison.” Notice that Christ proclaims the opening of the prison to them that are bound, and brings out the prisoners from the prison, because the Spirit is upon Him. This agrees with Peter’s statement that Christ, by the Spirit, went and preached to the spirits in prison.

Psalm 116:16: “O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of Thine handmaid; thou hast loosed my bonds.” Psalm 142:7: “Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Thy name.” Psalm 79:11: “Let the sighing of the prisoner come before Thee; according to the greatness of Thy power preserve Thou those that are appointed to die.” Compare Psalm 102:19-20; Hebrews 2:16. To this might be added our Saviour’s talk to the Jews, recorded in the eighth of John. He told them how they might be made free (verse 32). They denied that they were in bondage (verse 33). He told them that “whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin” (verse 34), and therefore in bondage. Compare Romans 6:16-18; 7:14; 2 Peter 2:19. He then told them that the Son alone could make them free (verse 36). Yet though Christ was there, filled with the same Spirit by which He preached to the wicked antediluvians, the Jews, like them, refused to be set free, and died in their sins (verse 21).

We leave it there, believing that you will have no difficulty in seeing what 1 Peter 3:18-20 teaches on the subject; that by the same Spirit by which Christ was raised from the dead, He went in the days of Noah, and through him, preached unto the antediluvians, who were in the bondage of sin; and that in so doing He was simply doing what He is doing today – “God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts” (Galatians 4:6) – and has been doing ever since the fall. This work of Christ, of preaching deliverance to the captives, is limited to this present life, for when He comes the second time He comes “without sin unto salvation,” to take the released prisoners home. Therefore, “Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts;” for, “behold now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”