

# **EQTH105 Basic Bible Doctrine**

## **Unit 5b The Work of the Holy Spirit**

Presented by the



**LANCASTER BIBLE COLLEGE**  
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Welcome back. In this lesson, we are going to talk about how the Holy Spirit works. But the bottom line is we will never have a full understanding of this. The reality is that the Holy Spirit works in ways beyond our understanding. Jesus compared the Spirit to the wind. He said, “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” [John 3:8] This reveals several things about the works of the Holy Spirit. First, the Holy Spirit works in a sovereign manner. He works in the way that *he desires*. The work of the Spirit is in accordance to the purposes of God. Just as the wind blows where it wishes, so the Spirit of God works where he desires.

Like the wind, the work of the Holy Spirit cannot be seen with our eyes. We see the results of the wind, but not the wind itself. And the same holds true for the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit’s work in a person’s life is invisible to everyone else, yet the results of that work, a changed life, can, like the results of the wind, be observed. Now, not only is the work of the Holy Spirit invisible; it is quite powerful. The wind can propel a sailing ship across the ocean or a glider across the sky. The Spirit also works in a powerful manner when he touches someone’s life. On the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came down upon believers, he did so accompanied by the sound of a mighty rushing wind. We read, “And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.” That’s in Acts 2:2.

Consequently, we cannot limit the Holy Spirit’s ministry. As the wind is invisible and powerful and blows where it wishes, so also is the work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we must always be careful not to try and make him conform to the way we believe he will work. So let’s talk about the ministry of the Holy Spirit in today’s world. The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit has a ministry not only to the believers of our age, but also to the unbelieving world. Jesus, in talking to his disciples, revealed to them the Holy Spirit’s ministry to the world. He said, “Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper (which is the Holy Spirit) will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you will see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.” [John 16:7-11]

Now, compare those verses in John to this one. Well-familiar. John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” We see in both these verses a reference to the world, and that would be the whole world. Not just believers, but every human being. The Holy Spirit has a mission to convict the world, the whole world, of sin. And Jesus fulfills the mission to redeem the world, the whole world, through his salvation to those who accept him. Once a person becomes a believer, the Holy Spirit has a personal ministry in the life of that believer. He convicts them of sin also, of their need to receive Christ as savior. The sin that the Holy Spirit convicts the world of is not any one specific sin, but the one that will keep them from getting to heaven, the sin of unbelief. We read, “And this is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” [John 3:19]

We also read Jesus said the Holy Spirit convicts the people of sin because they reject him, “because they do not believe in Me.” [John 16:9]

The remedy is for the unbeliever to recognize his sin of unbelief and trust Christ as savior. Each individual chooses whether to accept or reject the Holy Spirit’s conviction. In his work, the Holy Spirit also convicts the world for denying God’s righteousness. God’s righteousness is offended by the continual sin of the individual. The Bible speaks of the unbeliever as suppressing the truth of God on righteousness. We read, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.” And that’s in Romans 1. [Rom 1:18] The thought behind this verse is that the unbelieving person is willfully suppressing the truth of God that is trying to reach him. The Holy Spirit is convicting each unbelieving individual for doing this. Now, they can either respond to that conviction or continue to reject it.

Finally, the Holy Spirit convicts the world by judgment. One reason for the coming of Christ was to destroy the works of the devil. We read, “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” That’s 1 John 3:8. Jesus came to earth, lived a perfect, sinless life, and his death upon the cross paid the price for every person’s sins. When he rose three days later, not only had sin been defeated, but death also. The ministry of the Holy Spirit to the unbeliever is to reveal the truth that God indeed is victorious in the conflict with the devil, and the unbelieving world no longer has to live in the grip of Satan. So the Holy Spirit convicts believers and unbelievers alike of their sin. He convicts them of their rejection of Christ, and he convicts the world by judgment.

The Holy Spirit also has a ministry to the world as a restrainer. As bad as things are in the world, they would be much, much worse without the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is presently acting as a restraining force to hold back sin. He does this through the influence of the believer. As long as the Holy Spirit is working in the world through the presence of the believer, sin will not run utterly rampant. In this way, the Holy Spirit ministers to the world. He also does this, as we have seen, by convicting the world of its sin, by revealing its need for Christ’s salvation, and by restraining evil. But for believers, the Holy Spirit fills a special role. The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit guides the believer. We read, “However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you the things to come.” That’s in John 6:13. We also read, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.” [2Co 2:12]

Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would come and guide the believer into all truth. The work of the Holy Spirit illuminates the heart and mind of the believer to the things of Jesus Christ. This is important because the Bible reveals to us that Satan has put a spiritual blindfold over the minds of those who do not believe. In 2 Corinthians, we read, “But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.” [2Co 4:3-4] Once a person trusts Christ, the blindfold is removed and the Holy Spirit begins the work of illuminating the meaning of Scripture to his newly believing mind. This helps him better understand the things of God.

Now, among believers, and if you are a believer and have been reading your Bible for any length of time, you may have heard the phrase “blaspheming the Holy Spirit” or “blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.” Jesus spoke of a sin called the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. What is it? Can someone who commits this sin be forgiven? Well, the background of this statement can be found in Matthew 12:22-30. Jesus healed a man who was possessed by a demon. His demon possession made him blind, mute, and probably deaf. This combination of illnesses made it impossible for anyone to cast the demon out of the man because there was no way anyone could communicate with him. When the people saw Jesus heal the man, they wondered if he could be the Messiah. Now at that, the suggestion that Jesus could be the Messiah brought a quick response from the religious leaders. They said, “This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.” [Mat 12:24] They accused Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Satan. Who would want to follow someone who is working with Satan? But Jesus responded by showing how illogical their arguments were. He then made this statement: “Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.” [Mat 12:31-32] And there it is, blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.

From the statements of Jesus, we learn the following concerning this blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. Number one, we learn that the sin was against the Holy Spirit. The accusation was made by the Pharisees not only against Christ. Ultimately, it was against the Holy Spirit who was performing the miracles through Christ. Number two, those who sin against Jesus can be forgiven, but sinning against the Holy Spirit, who personifies the power of God, is unforgivable. There can be no question that the miracle had been through the power of the Holy Spirit. Those who attribute the Holy Spirit’s work to Satan cannot expect to be forgiven. Number three, the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is more than one particular sin. It is a continuous state of being. In fact, it’s a continuous state of denial. The religious leaders were continually attributing the works of Christ through the Holy Spirit to the devil. This revealed the evil condition of their hearts. Number four, the consequences of blaspheming the Holy Spirit means eternal damnation. There can be no forgiveness in this life or in eternity.