

THE TEACHING
LEGACY
 OF DEREK PRINCE

The Spirit of Truth

In this Teaching Legacy series, *Who Is the Holy Spirit?*, our goal has been to grasp the mystery of the Holy Spirit. Our study of God's Word so far has allowed us to see the presence of the Holy Spirit in creation; His unique role in the Trinity; His eternal existence, omniscience, and omnipresence. Our most recent segment focused on His holiness—reminding us of this aspect of His character: He is the *Holy Spirit*.

As I have emphasized all along, our touchstone for interaction with the Holy Spirit is the Scriptures, which show us how we can actually come to know Him. Jesus speaks to His disciples about this sense of *knowing* in John 14:16-17:

And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

When Jesus promised to ask the Father to send the Holy Spirit, He gave this Helper a special name: “the Spirit of truth.” Along with Jesus' promise came the warning that the world would not be able to receive this Helper.

The World Cannot Know

In this day and age, when the very idea of “truth” is under attack, it should not surprise us that the world is not willing to receive “the Spirit of truth”—the Holy Spirit. Why is this so? The Scriptures supply two reasons.

First, from the first day men and women turned away from God in rebellion, they have been unwilling to accept the truth. Why? Because the truth exposes their unrighteous deeds. Therefore, as Romans 1:18 says, they are determined to “*suppress the truth in unrighteousness.*”

Second, rebellion against God has exposed humanity to the domination of the god of this age: “*Satan, who deceives the whole world*” (Revelation 12:9). Deception is the primary weapon through which Satan keeps humanity under his tight control. Why is the enemy so relentless in his efforts to deceive us? He knows that once his deception is stripped away, the world will see the truth—that Satan has nothing to offer anyone except a place with him in the lake of eternal fire!



What Is Truth?

For many centuries, human philosophy has struggled to produce a satisfactory definition of “truth.” Our world is asking the same question Pontius Pilate asked in his encounter with Jesus over 2000 years ago: “*What is truth?*” (John 18:38).

The Bible provides a threefold answer to Pilate’s question. First, Jesus said, “*I am the truth*” (John 14:6). Second, in praying to God the Father, He said, “*Your word is truth*” (John 17:17). Third, John tells us, “*The [Holy] Spirit is truth*” (1 John 5:6).

In the spiritual realm, therefore, there are three coordinates of truth: Jesus; the Scripture; and the Holy Spirit. When these components line up, we arrive at truth—absolute truth. It is important to check all of these coordinates in coming to a conclusion. In this regard, there are three questions we must ask concerning any spiritual issue:

- 1) Does it represent Jesus as He truly is?
- 2) Is it in harmony with Scripture?
- 3) Does the Holy Spirit bear His witness?

Historically, the Church could have been spared many errors and deceptions if it had *consistently referred to these coordinates of truth* in its presentation of teaching and revelation. Before we accept what is presented to us as truth, all three coordinates must be in place: Jesus, the Scripture, and the Holy Spirit.

Bearing Witness

How does the Holy Spirit function as one of the major components in this truth process? The distinctive function of the Holy Spirit is to **bear witness**, as stated in 1 John 5:6: “*It is the Spirit who bears witness.*”

The Spirit bears witness to Jesus as the eternal Son of God, who shed His blood on the cross as the all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. In the words of Charles Wesley’s classic hymn, “Arise My Soul,

Arise”: *The Spirit answers to the blood, and tells me I am born of God.*

The Holy Spirit also bears witness to the truth and authority of Scripture, as Paul wrote to the Thessalonians:

For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance. 1 Thessalonians 1:5

Ananias and Sapphira

As we saw in John 14, Jesus called the Holy Spirit “*the Spirit of truth.*” It follows then that there can be no compromise between the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of truth, and Satan, “*for he is a liar and the father of it*” (John 8:44). This was dramatically demonstrated in the early church—when Ananias and Sapphira lied about the money they had offered to the church. They claimed that their offering was the full price of the property they had sold. In fact, they had kept back part of these proceeds for themselves.

Clearly, the Spirit of truth in Peter was not deceived. He charged Ananias with lying—not merely to men, but also to the Spirit of truth Himself:

But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.” Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. Acts 5:3-5

Three hours later, Sapphira came in and repeated the same lie. Like her husband, she paid for that lie with her life.

If asked what their sin was, you might say it was lying. Actually, the sin which Ananias and Sapphira were guilty of was **hypocrisy**—religious pretense. They were pretending to be more generous and more committed to the Lord than they really were.

Jesus reserved His strongest words of condemnation for this sin when He found it in the religious leaders of His day. Seven times in Matthew 23 He said to the Pharisees: “Woe to you...*hypocrites!*”

What Is Hypocrisy?

Our English words “hypocrite” and “hypocrisy” are derived from the Greek word *hupokrites*, which means “actor.” This is the essence of hypocrisy: putting on a religious act. Probably no sin is more common among religious people than hypocrisy. (In fact, some forms of religion almost demand it.)

Have you ever noticed how the manner and behavior of some people change when they enter a religious setting? They are no longer natural, free, and open. Gripped by some kind of invisible “cramp,” they feel required to put on a religious mask. Different branches of religion may require masks of a different kind. But few of them allow people to be their real selves.

Job’s Example

The God of the Bible has no tolerance for hypocrites. This comes out very clearly in the story of Job. Job’s three friends poured forth a torrent of religious platitudes. They said, in effect, “God always blesses the righteous; they never suffer unjustly.” They also claimed, “God always judges the wicked; they never prosper.” Yet the facts of history demonstrate that this is not true. It is just religious talk!

Job, on the other hand, was completely frank. He said, in effect, “God is not treating me fairly. I

have done nothing to deserve all this. But even if He kills me, I will still trust Him.”

In Job 42:7, the Lord revealed His estimate of the conduct of Job and his friends.

“The LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, ‘My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has.’”

We need to ask ourselves: How does the hypocritical religious behavior among us differ from the sin of Ananias and Sapphira, which cost them their lives?

The Moment of Truth

At a certain point in his career, King David was guilty of two terrible sins. First, he committed adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of his neighbor Uriah. Then to cover up his sin, he procured the murder of Uriah.

Apparently, David got away with all this—until God’s messenger, the prophet Nathan, confronted him with his sin. At that moment, David’s eternal destiny hung in the balance. By God’s grace, David made the right response. He offered no excuses, nor did he make any attempt to cover up. He simply acknowledged, “*I have sinned*” (2 Samuel 12:13).

Later on, in Psalm 51, David offered up a prayer of confession and then a cry for mercy. Verses 5 and 6 each begin with the word, “Behold,” expressing a sudden revelation of a vital truth.

Verse 5 says, “*Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.*” David had come face to face with something that only the Spirit of truth can reveal. It was not just the sinful acts he had committed, but also the awful evil power of inherited sinfulness which indwells every descendant of Adam.

Verse 6 reveals the only basis on which God offers deliverance from the power of indwelling sin:

“Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts.” Even after his sin, David had continued to go through all the outward forms of behavior appropriate to his role as king. But now there was a vast gap between his outward behavior and the inward condition of his heart. He had become a *hypocrite*—an actor playing a part which no longer corresponded to what was in his heart. For this hypocrisy, there was only one remedy: honest confession and wholehearted repentance. It is the same remedy for you and me if there is any hypocrisy in us.

A Barrier to Revival

Many Christians today are speaking and praying about “revival.” But they often overlook the fact that there is one barrier to revival that can never be bypassed. What is that barrier? It is sin. Until sin is dealt with, true revival can never come. And there is only one way to deal with sin: “*He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy*” (Proverbs 28:13).

Frankly, many sections of the contemporary church are full of “covered sin.” Here are some sins Christians often seek to cover:

1. Abuse of a child—physical, emotional, sexual—or a combination.
2. Broken marriage vows.
3. Unethical dealings with money.
4. Addiction to pornography. (It would shock you to discover how common this is among church leaders.)
5. Gluttony and overindulgence of our physical appetites.

God’s remedy—in conjunction with the Spirit of truth—is twofold: first, **confess**; then, **forsake**. It is seldom easy to confess our sins. Yet there is no other remedy. “*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*” (1 John 1:9). God has never committed Himself to forgive sins we are not willing to confess.

But it is not enough merely to confess. We must also “forsake.” We must make a resolute determination not to continue to commit the sin we have confessed. We must follow the succinct advice Daniel gave to King Nebuchadnezzar: “*Break off your sins by being righteous*” (Daniel 4:27).

What About You?

If this letter has brought to mind some areas of sin or disobedience in your life, this is a good time to open up to the Spirit of truth! He is ready and willing to come to your aid. Let’s ask for that help now.

Dear Heavenly Father, I open my heart now to the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of truth. I already know there are areas of sin and disobedience in me. I confess them to You, and I commit myself to forsake them as I move forward in Your grace. Thank You for making the power of Your Spirit available to us. May the Spirit of truth be at work in me from this day forward in every aspect of my life and ministry. Amen.



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