**the spirit’s ministry to
unbelievers and believers**

(Selected Scriptures)

It’s hard to believe that the movie *Schindler’s List* is 25 years old. (Comments)

Oskar Schindler cared for his own family, but once the Jews in Germany began to be carted off to the concentration camps, he suddenly tried to save the lives of as many of the Jews as he possibly could (amazing, given that he was German and a Nazi as well).

Like Oskar Schindler, the Spirit of God seeks the spiritual welfare of people outside His family as well as inside.

Today, I would like to speak to you (primarily) about the Spirit of God’s ministry to those outside of His family (unbelievers) and then His ministry to believers.

(Prayer)

**The Spirit’s Ministry to Unbelievers**

**1. He strives** (Gen 6:3).

**Genesis 6:3**-----3 And the Lord said, “My Spirit shall not **strive** with man forever, for he *is* indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.”

Some of the meanings of this word are “contend, argue, or, remain.”

Some scholars say it means “remain” with the idea that God will remove His “breath” from humans, and they will die. In other words, the world had become so evil, it only has 120 years until the flood comes and God removes the breath of life from them.

On the other hand, some scholars take the first definition (to strive with, to contend).

Preaching to the unsaved religious leaders of Israel after the resurrection of Christ, Stephen said:

**Acts 7:51**-----51 “*You* stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! **You always resist the Holy Spirit**; as your fathers *did,* so *do* you.

What is implied here is that the Spirit is attempting to get through to people, but they resist Him because they are “stiff-necked”—they are stubborn and want their way and not His.

So, God the Spirit will strive or contend with people, but He has a time limit on how long He will do this.

The apostle Peter said that:

**1 Peter 3:20**-----“…**the Divine longsuffering waited** in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared…

…**but**, He did not wait forever. The Holy Spirit spoke through Noah’s preaching, waiting 120 years, but in the end, eight people got on the ark and the rest of humanity died.

Interestingly, some scholars see the phrase “his days shall be one hundred and twenty years” as a reference to a new human lifespan God was inaugurating. But others believe that it means that God would only contend with sinful mankind another 120 years until He sent the flood.

The Holy Spirit of God is very patient. He is the “Divine longsuffering.” He works in the hearts of unsaved mankind in drawing them to Christ, but only for so long.

It is difficult to know if the Spirit of God will simply stop striving during an unbeliever’s life. We don’t really have a verse that tells us if an unsaved person can resist the Spirit of God to the point that He removes His work in their lives. There are some verses that *seem to say* something close to that, but it’s probably best to not be dogmatic here.

(BTW, later in this series, Lord willing, we will look at the “blasphemy of the Holy Spirit”—often called “The Unpardonable Sin”.)

**2. He convicts** (John 16:8–11).

Very similar to the idea of the Spirit of God **striving** with unbelieving mankind is the idea of His **convicting** mankind.

When Jesus was on earth, **He** was making the case for own His holiness and the sin of mankind. But once He left the earth, **the Spirit** would do this:

**John 16:8–11**-----8 And when He [the Spirit] has come,

***When did that happen? Pentecost.***

He will [future] convict the world [all humanity] of sin [singular---undoubtedly, the sin of unbelief], and of righteousness, and of judgment: 9 of sin, because they do not believe in Me; 10 of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; 11 of judgment, because the ruler of this world [Satan] is judged.

**The Holy Spirit’s convicting work among unsaved humanity is:**

1. **To show them that they are still in their sins**

“because they do not believe in Me”

1. **To show them that Jesus is good and of God** (and not a sinner, deceiver, born of fornication, etc.)

“of righteousness, because I go to My Father”

While Christ was on earth, He was able to defend His own righteousness with no problem. The religious leaders tried and tried to make Him out to be a sinner and of the devil, but they were unsuccessful. Once Jesus went back to heaven, the Holy Spirit then took His place and advocated for the His righteousness.

Of course, when Christ’s holiness and righteousness is magnified, the unbeliever sees the depth of his/her depravity and evil.

1. **To show them that judgment awaits them**

“of judgment, because [Satan] is judged”

Satan’s judgment occurred at Christ’s death and resurrection.

Once Pentecost arrived, it became the Spirit’s job to show unbelievers that Christ defeated Satan, and that Satan is doomed.

If the **general** of the army has been defeated, what does that mean for his **troops**?

The Holy Spirit has come to show unbelievers that hell was created for the devil and his angels, and that if a person stays on Satan’s team (that is, continues on in unbelief), he/she is doomed to hell along with him.

Stephen Kingsley of Craigmont, Idaho owns a carpet cleaning business. To show potential customers who own pets their need for the service, he darkens the room and then turn on a powerful black light. The black light causes “doggie-generated” carpet stains to glow brightly. To the horror of the homeowner every drop and dribble could be seen, not only on the carpet, but usually on walls, drapes, furniture, and even on lamp shades. One homeowner begged him to shut off the light: **"I can't bear to see anymore. I don't care what it costs. Please clean it up!"** Another woman said, **"I'll never be comfortable in my home again."**

Kingsley said: “The offense was there all the time, but it was invisible until the right light exposed it. It would have been cruel to show customers the extent of their problem and then say, ‘Too bad for you’ and walk away. I brought the light so that they might desperately want my cleaning services.”

This pictures the work of the Spirit in the heart of the unbeliever. The Holy Spirit shines the light of Christ, not just to make them feel guilty and leave them that way. He also has a cleaning service to offer—salvation through faith alone in Christ!

**The Spirit’s Ministry to Believers**

**At the moment of salvation (RIBS)**

1. **He regenerates us** (John 3:5–6, 8; Titus 3:5).

“born of water and the Spirit” 3:5-6

“born of the Spirit” 3:8

**Titus 3:5**-----5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through **the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit**…

1. **He indwells us** (Rom. 8:9–11; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; 1 John 3.24; 4.13).
2. **He baptizes us into Christ’s family** (1 Cor. 12:13).
3. **He seals us** (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13–14; 4:30).
4. **He guarantees our inheritance** (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14).
5. **He adopts us** (Rom. 8:15). See Gal 4:5; Eph 1:5

In these passages, “adoption” is a word that means more than our word “adopt” today, because it includes placement into a will to receive an inheritance.

1. **He gives us a spiritual gift** (1 Pe 4.10)

These all take place at the moment of salvation! But what about the ministry of the Spirit…

**After our salvation throughout life**

(This will be what we look at in all the weeks ahead---give short list here)

Some future topics:

* How the Spirit gives us victory over sin
* How the Spirit transforms us
* What is the filling of the Spirit?
* What is the anointing of the Spirit?
* What is the power of the Spirit?
* What is blasphemy of the Spirit?
* The Holy Spirit and Healing
* How do we test the spirits? (to see if they are from God)