

Dangers of Resisting the Holy Ghost

by John Hames

The sermon warns against the dangers of resisting the Holy Ghost and emphasizes the necessity of holiness for spiritual vitality.

Scripture: Proverbs 29:1

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Resisting God"

Description

John Hames preaches about the powerful sermon by Stephen in Acts 7:51, highlighting Stephen's courage to stand up for his God-given convictions and his ability to stir the devil while remaining calm. Hames emphasizes the importance of not resisting the Holy Ghost, explaining that the Holy Ghost is a Divine Person who can be grieved or loved. He warns against resisting the Holy Ghost by refusing to give up sin, not keeping step with the light, and by not seeking sanctification and dying to carnality, sharing stories of individuals who faced tragic consequences for resisting the Holy Ghost.

Transcript

"Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." Acts 7:51.

These words were taken from that eloquent, pointed, fiery sermon by the holy Stephen delivered at Jerusalem before a council of the high church officials. The Sanhedrin, the Pharisees and the Priests from different synagogues made up the audience to which Stephen delivered his message which won for him a martyr's crown.

There are several outstanding things about Stephen I greatly admire.

One is his courage to stand up for his God-given conviction. I tell you it took courage and a real man to stand before a council of whitewashed sepulchers and tell them the truth. If there is anything which must stir heaven today it is a man with a burning message and one that stands for something. As long as Stephen preached in a general way the people sat still and quiet, but when he came to the application of the truth, then the stones began to be hurled. While Stephen did not live long, he made a mark while he did live. Personally I had rather burn out than rust out. Among the last things that the sainted Whitefield did was to go to the pulpit and give vent to the holy fire which burned in his very bones. Oh, for a race of moral heroes that are not afraid to take a stand against the popular tides of today.

Another thing about Stephen is that he stirred the devil and still kept perfectly calm and sweet. Some preachers and workers can stir the devil; but that isn't all; they let the devil stir them. There is no credit to take to yourself because the devil is stirred, but it is how you act and behave after he is stirred.

After this little introduction to Stephen, I now call your attention to the text. The entire verse reads: "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." Notice, he brought a double charge against the religious leaders of that day. First, he accused them of being stiff-necked; second, of resisting the Holy Ghost. To understand the meaning of being stiff-necked, we will have to turn back to an Old Testament scripture: "He that being often reprov'd and hardeneth (or stiffeneth) his neck shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy." Prov. 29:1. But why is the term stiff-necked used in our text? We know that a long neck, in the Bible, stands for haughtiness and pride; but the term stiff-necked means stubbornness, rebellion and resistance. When a soul fights off conviction and resists the Holy Ghost, God calls it hardening the neck and says: "He shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy." The only way I can explain some calamities and sudden deaths is by this verse: "He shall suddenly be

destroyed."

Rev. J. B. Culpepper, the great Southern evangelist, tells about six young men in a revival meeting. While the altar call was going on they stood like statues under such awful conviction that even after the congregation was dismissed they had not moved. Some Christian girls went to them with tears and pleading, saying, "The evangelist says he will pray with you now if you will come." But they stiffened their necks, hardened their hearts and resisted the Holy Ghost. In a few weeks after the meeting closed the pastor wrote the evangelist saying, "We buried the last of those six boys who were in your meeting under such awful conviction, and not one of them died a natural death." Suddenly destroyed and that without remedy.

Notice it says, "He that being often reprov'd." Now, I do not believe God cuts a man off the first time he may resist and fight off conviction, but if he continues to keep this up, look out for God's judgments. Rev. Milton L. Williams, the holiness evangelist, tells about six young persons in the back of the church during a revival meeting, who went in a covenant not to go to the altar unless they were carried there. Remember God is not carrying folks to the altar these days. After the meeting closed they decided that they would have a big time, so hired a hack and driver to take them up on a mountain to a picnic. They spent all day in frolic and fun, and as night was coming on the driver called that it was time to go. At the foot of the mountain was a railroad crossing. The driver stopped and asked if anyone knew when the train was due there. Someone called out, "seven o'clock." "If that is true," said the driver, "the lightning express is gone." But she was a few minutes late, and just as the horse had pulled the front wheel up to the first rail, here came the lightning express around the curve, and struck that carriage a full blow. Mangled, torn, dead bodies were picked up, down that track, and carried home. The next day six caskets were brought down the aisle and placed over the altar in the front of that church in which they had said, "We will not go unless we are carried there." They were carried there, but too late. I tell you I had rather play with forked-tongue lightning than with the Holy Ghost.

This brings me up to my text, "Resisting the Holy Ghost." First of all, we want to consider who, and what is the Holy Ghost. He is none other than the very eternal God who in the beginning brought order out of chaotic nature. That Being who was here at creation morn and was interested in the world's physical generation, is here now and is interested in humanity's regeneration. Then the Holy Ghost is a Divine

Person. He is not an influence or the abstract of power. He is the third person of the eternal God-head.

There are three things that enter into and constitute personality. First, intelligence. A person is one who thinks. That enables one to offer hospitality to the Holy Ghost. He is the Author of these sacred letters. Holy men wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Another element is emotion. The Holy Ghost is a person who can feel, be grieved or loved. We read of the great love of the Spirit. Still another element in personality is the will or the power to choose. So you see we are not dealing with an influence or a mere person when we say "no" to the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost is the only person in the Divine Trinity that man is capable of resisting. God the Father can create and uphold worlds without asking us. But when it comes to the Holy Ghost, His work in soul saving is subject to the will-power of each individual. In other words salvation or damnation is left entirely with us. I can say "yes" to God, and all the devils in hell, and men on earth, cannot stop me from getting saved. On the other hand, (I say it with reverence), I can say "no," and all heaven cannot force me to be saved.

The thought of God not always striving with man is often misunderstood. The word "strive" does not mean physical force or to overpower my will. Jesus said, the Comforter is come he will convince the world of sin." The word "convince" means to reason and appeal to one's intellect. The Holy Ghost respects man's will power. If he reaches the heart it will be through his intellect, his perception and reasoning faculties. He will flash something in the mind to cause one to stop and reflect, or He may bring up some past event which will stand up before one with startling vividness and power to convince. Now comes the thought of resistance to the Spirit. It is seen in an effort to give that truth another meaning, or try to reason away conviction, or drive it out of the mind by thoughts of resistance.

Another work of the Holy Ghost is to reprove. When He (the Comforter) is come, He "shall reprove the world of sin." The word "reprove" is a stronger word than the word "convince." Here we may look for greater resistance to the Spirit than is found in the act of convincing. A sinner may sit and listen to the truth and give assent to the truth in his mind, but when the Spirit carries that truth home and reproves him of sin, then comes the real resistance upon which his eternal destiny may hinge. How do men resist the Holy Ghost? By refusing to give up sin. When He shines into the heart and life He makes sin look exceeding sinful and puts His finger on the besetting sin. Now here is where the real fight begins. If the sinner continues to fight off conviction, stiffens his neck, and hardens his heart, the Holy Ghost will gradually depart, leaving him in darkness and a slave to his sins and passions.

Again, men resist the Holy Ghost by not keeping step with the light. God cannot give us all the light we will need at once. You could not stand it if He was to turn the full blaze of the Holy Ghost light on you all of a sudden. It would blind you. It would be like coming out of darkness into a room with lights blazing like the shining sun. You would be blinded by its brightness. So, as we walk with the Holy Ghost, and continue to grow in grace, He keeps turning light on our pathway. Perhaps you went for years and never tithed your income and never got under condemnation for it. But one day, through a sermon on tithing, or reading a good book, you got light on this important doctrine. Now, if we refuse to tithe, we grieve the Holy Ghost and bring condemnation on our soul. I have known people, good people, yes, saved people, to go for years without taking up family prayer, but during a revival they got light, went home, erected the family altar, without having a break with the Holy Ghost. Others have worn their jewelry after being saved, and never thought a thing of it; but all of a sudden the Spirit flashed light on it and they had a shedding time. Amen! When Moses approached the presence of God at the burning bush he pulled off his shoes. But, he is not the only one that ever had to pull off something when they got real close to God. Say, you will come

out from the "goat crowd" when you get what I am talking about. Brother, you can't ride the goat and follow the Lamb at the same time.

Once more, men resist the Holy Ghost by refusing to get sanctified and die to carnality. When Israel of old, in their marches, came up to a place called Kadesh Barnea, which means holiness heights, they were to go over at once and possess the land. That was God's purpose in bringing them out of Egypt. But they rebelled and later when they saw their mistakes, they told Moses they would now go and possess the land. But he said they should not go, as God was not with them, as they had grieved His presence by not going up at His appointed time, and as a result they bleached their bones in the wilderness. If Canaan is typical of holiness, which all the standard writers accept, then it holds good that if we refuse to get sanctified when light comes and God leads us right up to the blessing, we grieve the Holy Ghost. And if this is continued and kept up any length of time, we will finally forfeit our justification and lose out altogether.

Oh, the powerless preachers all over this country, preaching without unction, oil, liberty and power. If the truth were known, back yonder somewhere in their life, they came up to the fork of the road where it was either go in and get sanctified wholly, or lose what grace they did have. Poor souls, in some instances they repent, pray through, and are saved by the skin of their teeth. But, oh, the good they might have done had they tarried for Pentecost. Catherine Booth said this: "You will never know what you have missed, and others you might have influenced, by not being filled with the Spirit." These words went like arrows to my heart and I began with real earnestness to seek after holiness, and never stopped until I obtained the blessing.

There are hundreds of scriptures in the New Testament alone, which deal with holiness, sanctification, Christian perfection, and perfect love. There are sixteen commands in the New Testament and eighteen prayers that you may be sanctified. Now, with all of these promises and commands urging a person to seek holiness, I do not believe one can go very long, in these days, without coming right up to the light of holiness. And to say, "no" is to resist the Holy Ghost. If it is necessary for sinners to come to the altar to keep from resisting the Holy Ghost, it is just as essential for you believers to get sanctified wholly to keep from resisting Him.

This is one startling incident to show you the danger of saying "no" to the doctrine of holiness. Some years ago one of the leading churches of Methodism was left without a pastor. The official board met and authorized one of their laymen to visit all the leading conferences that fall, and when he found the man for Grace First Church, to wire them his terms.

Finally, way out west he found Dr. B--, a great orator. He agreed to come to Grace First Church. In due time the new preacher arrived, and with his charming personality and flow of eloquence he captured the crowds, and had no trouble in filling that great church auditorium and its galleries to overflow. He was the idol of his members for months, and even the worldly element flocked in great throngs to listen to him.

But there was a secret in Dr. B.'s life that just a very few knew about. At a holiness camp sometime previous he had been put under awful conviction for the blessing of holiness. He sought it with earnestness for three days and on the third morning he cried out, "I am sanctified." But when he went back and began to preach this to his worldly church a storm was raised. After a committee waited on him to show him the error of his way, telling him it would ruin his usefulness to profess holiness, a pressure was made to bear upon him until he got up publicly and said, "Brethren being of a nervous temperament and

very emotional, while at that holiness camp, having my emotions stirred, I professed something that I did not have and will now renounce it."

As a result of this rash statement, he lost the Holy Ghost and crossed the dead line. Soon after this, he was transferred to this big, popular, worldly church. Easter came and Dr. B. was to preach his master sermon on the resurrection. He came in from his study from a side door. Only a very few of the members in the congregation had seen him come to the pulpit. Because of so many ferns and flowers, the preacher was partly hidden, but the members of the choir whispered to each other, saying, "Dr. B. is deadly pale." Just then peals of music thundered from the big pipe organ and as the choir rose to sing, Dr. B. fainted and fell from his chair. Some of the brethren nearby were called and they bore their pastor to the parsonage. Doctors and nurses were called and they fought with death from eleven that morning until seven that evening.

Just at seven Dr. B. came to consciousness just for a moment and called for Dr. P. Dr. P. was the elder who was to preach for him that evening. He had come in on a late train and as no one met him he took a car and came to the parsonage and had just come in when Dr. B. called for him. The poor man with a weak voice, said: "Dr. P., I am a dying man and I want you to preach my funeral sermon. Take for a text, Luke 16:23, 'And in hell he lifted up his eyes.'" He said, "When I went back on holiness and said there was nothing in it, God left me. You warn the people at my funeral and tell them that without holiness no man shall see the Lord." He said, "Ever since eleven o'clock this morning, when I fainted from that pulpit chair, my soul has been in the regions of the damned," and with these words he died.

I tell you, friends, it is holiness or hell, and we can resist the Holy Ghost right here tonight by refusing to let Him cleanse our heart and make us perfect in love. I have seen men and women grieve and resist Him until it seemed I could almost see the Holy Ghost Dove fold His snowy wings and leave them forever. Don't you do it, but come to Him just now.

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