

The Holy Spirit

The Work of the Holy Spirit

Lesson 3

Introduction:

- I. Let's turn our attention to the work of the Holy Spirit.
 - A. We want to investigate the role or function of the Holy Spirit in the past, as well as consider how the Holy Spirit functions and accomplishes His work today.
 1. More specifically, what is the Holy Spirit's function in these four areas:
 - a. What function did the Holy Spirit perform in the area of **revelation** – of revealing the mind of God to mankind through the process of inspiration – and does He still function in that capacity today?
 - b. What role does the Holy Spirit perform in the work of **conviction** – of convicting all mankind that we sinners in need of redemption?
 - c. What function does the Holy Spirit perform in the work of **conversion** – what role does the Holy Spirit play in saving souls and in providing redemption from sin?
 - d. And finally, what role does the Holy Spirit play in the work of **sanctification** – in sanctifying us, or making us separate and set apart as God's own possession?
 2. And as we consider these four areas, we want to also consider whether the Holy Spirit accomplishes these things directly (through a direct operation on the heart of the sinner), or indirectly (through some other means).

Body:

- I. The Holy Spirit's work in the area of revelation.
 - A. The word "revelation" simply means "to uncover or unveil, to lay bare, or to reveal that which is hidden."
 1. In the Biblical sense, revelation pertains to revealing the will of God to humankind.
 - a. This is why the last letter in the New Testament is called "The Revelation of Jesus Christ."
 - b. It is an "uncovering or unveiling" of the nature and character of Jesus Christ as He rules among the nations of men as King of kings and Lord of lords.
 - B. The Holy Spirit was at the very center of the work of revelation in the Old Testament – of revealing the will of God to humankind.
 1. The apostle Peter spoke of salvation through Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:10-12).

2. Peter also spoke of how the prophets knew about this salvation (2 Peter 1:21).
 3. The process of revealing the will of God through the Holy Spirit is known as "inspiration" – literally meaning "breathed of God" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
- C. The same is true of the Holy Spirit's work of revelation in the New Testament.
1. Jesus promised His apostles that the Holy Spirit would assist them (John 14:26; 16:13-14).
 2. God's revelation through the process of divine inspiration was always confirmed or authenticated by miracles, signs, and wonders done by the Holy Spirit.
 - a. When God sent Moses to Egypt to deliver the Israelites from bondage, Moses was able to confirm to the Israelites and to Pharaoh that he was speaking for God (Exodus 4:1-9).
 - b. Jesus performed miracles to prove that He was the Son of God and spoke with God's authority (Matthew 4:23-24; Mark 2:1-12; 4:35-41; Luke 13:11-17; John 10:24-38; 11:41-48; 20:30-31; 21:25 etc.).
 - c. The apostles were also empowered by the Holy Spirit to confirm the authenticity of their preaching and teaching through miracles (Mark 16:15-20; Acts 2:1-4, 43).
 3. During the age of the apostles, while the word was still being revealed and confirmed, spiritual gifts were occasionally given to some Christians to also confirm the word (i.e. Philip, Acts 8:5-8).
 4. However, those spiritual gifts did not continue indefinitely after the revelation of the Holy Spirit was completed and confirmed (1 Corinthians 13:8-10; Hebrews 2:2-4).
- D. The Holy Spirit's work of revelation is understandable (capable of being understood by all), is sufficient to meet all our needs, and is now final and complete.
1. The apostle Paul said the things he wrote by revelation of the Spirit are understandable (Ephesians 3:1-5; 5:17; 1 Corinthians 4:6).
 - a. Having the divinely inspired Spirit-given word of God enables us to know and understand the work alike (1 Corinthians 1:10; Philippians 1:27).
 2. Scripture given by inspiration is not only understandable but all-sufficient in meeting all our needs (2 Timothy 3:14-17).
 - a. Therefore, we must be careful to handle it correctly and preach nothing else except the Holy Spirit given word (2 Timothy 2:15; 4:2-4).
 - b. The only way to know if what we are hearing is the divinely inspired word of God is to test it against the Scriptures themselves (1 John 4:1; Acts 17:11).
 3. The apostle Peter affirmed that we have been given everything we need to know concerning eternal life and godliness (2 Peter 1:2-4).
 4. Peter also affirms the word given by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit will endure and remain incorruptible forever (1 Peter 1:22-25).

5. The word of God revealed by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is "the faith" – the faith-producing word of God – that has been delivered once for all time (Jude 3).
- E. But why doesn't everyone universally agree on everything the divinely inspired Spirit-given word teaches?
1. Jesus said it may be as simple as not knowing the Scriptures – as in the case of the Sadducees (Matthew 22:29).
 2. Jesus also said (quoting from Isaiah) some don't want to see or understand (Matthew 13:15).
 - a. Stephen encountered people like this when he was brought before the Sanhedrin (Acts 7:50).
 - b. The apostle Paul warned Timothy about those who are much the same (1 Timothy 1:5-7).
 - c. Paul and Barnabas ran into people in Antioch whose envy, jealousy, and prejudice caused them to blaspheme against the things preached (Acts 13:40-46).
 3. And, of course, one of the most basic reasons why people don't understand the Bible alike is because of their own laziness (2 Timothy 2:15; Ephesians 5:17).
- F. In conclusion, the work of the Holy Spirit in the realm of revelation was to make known the will of God to all humankind through the process of inspiration.
1. God's will was delivered to His holy apostles and prophets as they were moved, guided, influenced, and directed by the Holy Spirit.
 2. Those divinely inspired men wrote down the things revealed to them so that we may be able to understand the will of God by simply reading what they wrote.
 3. Now that we have the written word, we have everything we need to make us complete – everything we need that pertains to life and godliness.
 4. This is why the divinely inspired word of God will always remain incorruptible and will abide forever.
 5. As long as we are diligent to search the Scriptures and not go beyond what is written we will not only understand the will of the Lord but be able to faithfully keep the Lord's will.
- II. What was the work of the Holy Spirit in the area of conviction?
- A. Jesus told His disciples that the work of convicting the world of its sinful state would be the work of the Holy Spirit.
1. The word "convict" means to "reprove," or "to convince" or "to tell someone their fault."
 2. In fact, the Holy Spirit will convict the world of sin, reprove the world of its unrighteousness, and convince the world of a coming judgment (John 16:7-11).
- B. But how would the Holy Spirit accomplish the task of convicting, reproving, and convincing an ungodly world of sin?

1. The Calvinist position is:
 - a. "The Holy Spirit, Whom the Father is ever willing to give to all who ask Him, is the only efficient agent in the application of redemption. He convicts men of sin, moves them to repentance, regenerates them by His grace, and persuades and enables them to embrace Jesus Christ by faith."
 - b. "The doctrine holds that this purposeful influence of God's Holy Spirit cannot be resisted, but that the Holy Spirit, 'graciously causes the elect sinner to cooperate, to believe, to repent, to come freely and willingly to Christ.' This is not to deny the fact that the Spirit's outward call (through the proclamation of the Gospel) can be, and often is, rejected by sinners; rather, it is that inward call which cannot be rejected."
 2. Two of the passages frequently quoted to support this theory are:
 - a. John 6:44 – "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day."
 - b. John 6:65 – "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father."
 3. However, by reading the rest of what Jesus said in this chapter it is easy to see that those who come to Christ must be taught by hearing and learning.
 - a. John 6:44-45 – "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. 45 It is written in the prophets, [Isaiah 54:13] 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore, everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me."
 4. What would they need to hear and learn – that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God?
 - a. Of course!
 5. Where would someone today go to hear and learn that truth?
 - a. They would go to the divinely inspired Spirit-given written word of the apostles who testified that Jesus is the Christ (John 20:30-31).
 6. God calls us today through the preaching and teaching of the gospel – were we are taught by what we hear and learn (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14).
- C. Look again at what Jesus said in John 16:7-11.
1. The Holy Spirit would reveal that the world stands condemned before God because of unbelief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God.
 - a. The New Testament is filled with references that we stand condemned before God as sinners (i.e. Romans 3:23; 5:12; 1 John 1:8-10).
 2. The Holy Spirit would reveal that righteousness (justification from sins) may be obtained through faith in Jesus Christ, because Christ has been resurrected from the dead, ascended into heaven, and is sitting at the right hand of God.

- a. The New Testament is filled with references that justification from sin is made possible through Jesus Christ because He has been resurrected from the dead (i.e. Romans 5:8-9; 1 Peter 1:3-5; 3:21-22).
 3. The Holy Spirit would reveal that judgment is sure and inescapable because Jesus Christ is the judge before whom we will all stand.
 - a. And the New Testament is filled with references about the final judgment where we must all give an account (i.e. John 12:47-48; Romans 14:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10).
 - D. So, how does the Holy Spirit convict us of these things today – through the Spirit-given word.
 1. The work of the Holy Spirit to convict the world of sin was revealed to the inspired writers through the process of inspiration and recorded for us in the pages of Scripture.
 2. When we open our Bibles and read what the Spirit revealed, it will always convict the honest heart that we stand condemned as a sinner before holy and righteous God.
- III. What about the work of the Holy Spirit in conversion?
- A. There are two questions about the Holy Spirit's work in conversion that we need to consider.
 1. Is the work of the Holy Spirit in converting the sinner done directly by some supernatural "direct operation" of the Holy Spirit on the heart of the sinner?
 2. Or is the work of the Holy Spirit in converting the sinner done indirectly through the soul-saving power of the gospel revealed in the divinely inspired, Spirit-given word?
 - B. The answer should seem rather obvious.
 1. The apostle Paul said power God uses to convert the sinner and to lead them to a saving faith is found in the gospel (Romans 1:16-17; 10:12-17).
 2. Every need the sinner has to be saved is supplied by the power of the gospel.
 - a. The gospel reveals the righteousness of God and likewise reveals the unrighteousness of man.
 - b. The gospel reveals the salvation that can be obtained through the blood of Jesus Christ.
 - c. The gospel reveals what we must do to obtain that salvation and be redeemed by the blood of Christ.
 - d. Furthermore, the gospel reveals what we must do to remain in a saved relationship with Jesus Christ, and what to do if we sin.
 3. The apostle Peter also said we purify our souls by obeying the truth – truth contained in the gospel (1 Peter 1:22-25).
 - C. All of us recognize that when we are converted, we are saved.
 1. Paul said we are saved through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5).

2. James said we must receive the implanted word to be saved (James 1:21).
 3. Does this mean Paul and James are contradicting one another?
 - a. Absolutely not!
 4. Paul says we are renewed by the Holy Spirit, and James simply explains how that is done – through the "implanted word, which is able to save your souls."
- D. The Holy Spirit works through the Spirit-given word – the gospel – to move people to obey Christ and be saved.
1. Everything necessary to do that is set forth in the Gospel: the love of God, the sacrifice of Christ, the forgiveness of sins, the hope of heaven, the eternal inheritance, the reality of hell, and the certainty of judgment.
 2. Every influence the Holy Spirit exerts on the sinner in the process of conversion, is done by and through the gospel which the Spirit revealed.
- E. After the church was established on Pentecost, there is not one case of conversion recorded in the Bible that was not accomplished through the preaching and teaching of the gospel.
1. The sword that pierces even the most hardened of hearts is the "sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" (Ephesians 6:17).
 2. Consider, for example, the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-29).
 - a. If there ever was a perfect opportunity for the Holy Spirit to speak directly to a sinner to convict him or come into his heart to "enlighten" him, this was it.
 - (1). But that's not what happened.
 - (2). Nowhere in Scripture does the Holy Spirit directly teach a sinner the gospel.
 - b. Who did the Spirit speak to on this occasion – Philip, who was appointed to preach Jesus to the Ethiopian man using the word of God (Acts 8:35)?
 3. Likewise, reading through the account in Acts 2 of the first sermon after the resurrection of Christ, we see the emphasis on audibly hearing (or in later cases, reading) the gospel through words (not a quiet voice within the heart).
 - a. Acts 2:4 – And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.
 - b. Acts 2:6 – ...everyone heard them speak in his own language.
 - c. Acts 2:8 – "And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?"
 - d. Acts 2:11 – "...we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."
 - e. Acts 2:14 – But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words."
 - f. Acts 2:22 – "Men of Israel, hear these words."
 - g. Acts 2:37 – Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart...

- h. Acts 2:38 – Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..."
 - i. Acts 2:40 – And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation."
 - j. Acts 2:41 – Then those who gladly received his word were baptized.
 - k. Acts 2:42 – And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine (teaching).
- 4. There is not a single passage in the entire New Testament where the Holy Spirit operated directly on the heart of an unbeliever to lead them to salvation apart from the word of God.
 - 5. In every example of conversion in the New Testament each person (or persons) heard the word of God.
 - a. Pentecost (Acts 2:14-47).
 - b. People of Samaria (Acts 8:5-13).
 - c. Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-39).
 - d. Saul (Acts 9:1-18).
 - e. Cornelius (Acts 10:34-48).
 - f. Lydia (Acts 16:14-15).
 - g. Philippian Jailer (Acts 15:25-34).
 - 6. To assert that the Spirit is working outside of the Scriptures to directly convert the sinner or bring the believer to repentance is to completely nullify the sufficiency of the gospel of Jesus.
 - a. If the Holy Spirit comes directly into a person's heart to interpret or to convict the sinner, why was there an emphasis in all the examples of conversion of hearing the spoken words of the gospel?
 - b. What would be the purpose of the teachers or the Scriptures in the first place?
- IV. Finally, we need to ask what does the Holy Spirit do in the work of sanctification?
- A. There are two words commonly used together when we speak of this work – the words sanctification and justification.
 - 1. What do these words mean?
 - a. The word "sanctified" means "to be made pure, and therefore set apart, such as being set apart for God, and to be used in His service."
 - b. The word "justified" means "to declare one to be free and innocent, or to declare one to be right in the sight of God."
 - 2. Paul used the two words together (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).
 - a. Did you notice that the work of justification and sanctification is a work of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:11)?
 - B. So, what is the role of the Holy Spirit in this work of sanctification and justification?
 - 1. First, we need to understand that we are sanctified and justified through the Word of God (John 17:17).

2. Second, we need to understand that the only way we can be sanctified, justified or purified of sin is through the word of God, the gospel of Christ (1 Peter 1:22-25).
 - a. The power of the Holy Spirit to sanctify, justify and purify is contained in the word of God – not in some mystical influence or force of an indwelling Spirit separate and apart from the word of God.
 3. And third, we need to understand that the power to help us grow and mature as Christians is likewise found only in the word of God (1 Peter 2:1-2; Hebrews 5:12-14).
- C. Through the Spirit-given word of God, the Holy Spirit has revealed everything we need to know and understand to live a transformed life of complete devotion and commitment to Christ.
1. This is how the Spirit motivates us to separate ourselves from the world, and how the Spirit motivates us to grow and mature spiritually as children of God.

Conclusion

- I. The work of the Holy Spirit is clearly spelled out in the Scriptures.
 - A. It is the work of revelation, conviction, conversion, and sanctification.
 1. The Holy Spirit accomplishes this work through instruction, persuasion, and through edification – all of which come from and through the pages of the Spirit-given Word.
 2. Every work the Holy Spirit accomplished in revelation, conviction, conversion and sanctification is done **in** and **through** the Spirit-given Word.
 - B. Those who make the work of the Holy Spirit some mystical, inexplicable force or power do so without one shred of Biblical evidence to support that claim.
 1. The power to save is in the gospel – the message of the gospel is the power God uses to pierce through the most unrepentant heart and bring lost souls to Christ (Romans 1:16).
 2. And the power behind the Gospel, is none other than the Holy Spirit.
 3. The Spirit-Given Word is the source of this power that works in us who believe.
 - a. It is through the Word of God that the "Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Romans 8:16).
 - b. It is through the Word of God that "the Holy Spirit teaches" (1 Corinthians 2:13).
 - c. It is through the Word of God that we are "led by the Spirit" (Galatians 5:18).
 - d. And It is through the Word of God that we are "strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man" (Ephesians 3:16).
 4. In fact, when we compare two parallel passages – one from Ephesians and the other from Colossians – we see the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the Word of God (Ephesians 5:18-19; Colossians 3:16).

- C. If we want the power of the Spirit to be at work in our life, then we need to immerse yourself in the Spirit-given Word.
 - 1. The Holy Spirit has already revealed what you need to know to convict us of sin and lead us to conversion and sanctification.