

The Conviction Of The Spirit

Introduction. The work of the Godhead is both unified and diversified. The work of each member can be called the work of God, yet there is diversity in the work of each one. The Father planned. The Son executed the divine plan. The Holy Spirit assisted and revealed this divine plan to man.

The denominational world is filled with the teaching and conviction that the Holy Spirit personally and literally dwells within the Christian. Many of these people do not propose to know how this indwelling takes place, nor do they seem to care how it takes place. They are just comforted by the presumed “fact” that it does happen.

We must base our understanding of spiritual subjects upon the teachings of the Bible, not upon feelings, opinions, desires, or denominational doctrines. This final lesson will examine three works of the Holy Spirit in God’s redemptive plan.

I. The Work Of Conviction

- A. The world needs convicting of sin, righteousness, and judgment.
 - 1. The Holy Spirit was the advocate, or one who argued in favor of Christ. He would convict the world of sin (John 16:7-8).
 - 2. As the advocate of Christ, He would be furnished with sufficient evidence and competent arguments to accomplish this task (John 16:13).
 - 3. He would argue from three vantage points.
 - a) The world stands condemned because of unbelief in Jesus Christ as God’s Son.
 - b) Righteousness or justification may be obtained through faith because Jesus as Christ has gone to heaven.
 - c) Judgment is sure because the prince of this world has been judged.
- B. The work continues through the revealed word of truth.
 - 1. The testimony to establish these points and convince the world was revealed and confirmed by the Holy Spirit, recorded by inspired writers, and stands today with the same force and power (Ephesians 3:3-5; 2 Peter 1:20-21).
 - 2. If mankind is convinced today, it will be by the gospel.
 - a) Sin (John 8:24; Romans 3:23-26).
 - b) Righteousness (Romans 1:16-17; Titus 2:11-12).
 - c) Judgment (John 12:48; Acts 17:30-31).

II. The Work Of Conversion

- A. Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.
 - 1. Jesus described the new birth as “of the Spirit” (John 3:3-8).
 - 2. This new birth is also described as “by the word of God” (1 Peter 1:23).
- B. We are born of the Spirit as we respond to the word.
 - 1. The Holy Spirit converts men, but He can only do it through the use of His sword, the word of God (Ephesians 6:17).
 - 2. The word is therefore able to save and purify us (James 1:21; 1 Peter 1:22).
 - a) We are begotten by the gospel (James 1:18; 1 Corinthians 4:15).
 - b) The begetting is necessary to physical birth. Although only the woman is present at actual birth, the new baby is of both man and woman.

- c) Likewise, a spiritual birth is not of water only, but is of both water and Spirit.
- C. Conversion is accomplished by the power of the gospel.
1. There is not a need the sinner has in being saved that is not supplied by the gospel. There is not an influence wielded by the Spirit that is not attributed to the gospel.
 - a) What can the Holy Spirit do that is not accomplished by the word of God?
 - b) They both accomplish the same in our lives.
 - (1) Teaches us (John 14:26; John 6:44-45).
 - (2) Admonishes us (Nehemiah 9:30; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).
 - (3) Convicts us (John 16:8; Titus 1:9).
 - (4) Begets us (John 3:5; 1 Peter 1:23).
 - (5) Quickens us (John 6:63; Psalm 119:50).
 - (6) Guides us (John 16:13; Psalm 119:105).
 - (7) Sanctifies us (1 Corinthians 6:11; John 17:17).
 - (8) Washes us (1 Corinthians 6:11; Ephesians 5:26).
 - (9) Saves us (Titus 3:5; James 1:21).
 - (10) Comforts us (Acts 9:31; 1 Thessalonians 4:18).
 - (11) Fills us (Ephesians 5:18; Colossians 3:16).
 - (12) Calls us (Revelation 22:17; 2 Thessalonians 2:14).
 - (13) Builds us up (Ephesians 3:16; Acts 20:32).
 - (14) Seals us (Ephesians 1:13; John 3:33-34).
 - (15) Witnesses to us (Romans 8:16; John 5:39).
 - (16) Gives us love (Romans 5:5; 1 John 2:5).
 - (17) Gives us joy (John 15:11; 1 Thessalonians 1:6).
 2. Every recorded case of conversion was accomplished through the preaching of the gospel. Everything necessary to move people to accept Christ and be saved is set forth in the gospel: love of God, sacrifice of Christ, forgiveness of sins, hope of heaven, eternal inheritance, fear of hell, and certainty of judgment.

III. The Work Of Sanctification

- A. God's people are called to a pure life.
1. If we are led by the Spirit, then our commitment to Christ is obvious (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Romans 8:12-17; 1 Peter 2:9).
 - a) Christ is seen in us (Romans 8:8-11; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 1:27).
 - b) The Father is seen in us (2 Corinthians 6:16; 1 John 4:12-15).
 2. We are under the control and influence of God revealed in the word, thus it can be said that God, Christ, and the Spirit are "in" us. No mystical "better felt than told" dwelling is taught in the Bible. If you can understand how God and Christ can be in us, then you also understand how the Holy Spirit can "dwell in you richly" and how we can be "filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18; Colossians 3:16).
 3. We cannot deny the fact that the Holy Spirit dwells in the Christian (1 Corinthians 6:19; 2 Timothy 1:14; James 4:5). However, these verses are not proof texts for a personal, literal indwelling. Not one of these verses tell us

how the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within us, other than the fact that God has given Him to us.

- a) One way that a person can be said to dwell in another is to the extent that he can exert an influence over that person. The Holy Spirit (and the Father and the Son) are dwelling in those who show the influence of the Holy Spirit in their lives; that is, they are living in the way that the Spirit tells them to live.
 - b) So, if we walk by the Spirit and bear the fruit of the Spirit, we can say that the Spirit is dwelling in us (Romans 8:1; Galatians 5:22-23).
 - (1) On the night that He was betrayed, Jesus told His apostles that He and His Father would abide with them if they would keep His word (John 14:20-23). This figure of speech used by the Lord emphasized the closeness of their ongoing fellowship; a fellowship which was conditioned upon their continued obedience to His word.
 - (2) Paul made a similar point to the Corinthians. Although Paul was no longer with them in Corinth, he told them that his spirit would be with them if they acted upon the influence of his letter (1 Corinthians 5:3-5).
4. The belief that the Holy Spirit literally, personally dwells within Christians is not just a harmless opinion. There are some serious consequences to this view.
- a) The written word becomes insufficient. If a Christian can receive the blessings that were designed by God to be received through His word in some means independent from the word, then the word of God is no longer necessary.
 - b) It is a dangerous step towards emotionalism. Some people insist that, through the Holy Spirit, they receive extra-biblical guidance and wisdom. Many of them confuse the trained conscience with the speaking of the Spirit.
 - c) The age of miracles has not ended. God works in this world through providence. Deity interacting with this physical world directly requires a miracle. Therefore, a miracle is required to literally and personally dwell in my physical body.
 - d) We are God. What made Jesus different was the fact that deity dwelt in His physical body (Matthew 1:23). If the Holy Spirit literally dwells in me, then why would I not also be God (Colossians 2:9)?
- B. Sanctification is made possible today through the word.
1. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, taught that there were two distinct phases in the life of a Christian.
 - a) During the first phase, conversion, the believer received forgiveness and became a Christian. During the second phase, sanctification, the believer was purified and made holy. These were referred to as the first and second works of grace.
 - b) In Holiness churches, the second work of grace is considered to be a cleansing from the tendency to commit sin. In addition, they believe that the third work of grace is the ability to perform miracles.

2. However, we are called by the gospel, and we know we are saved when we obey (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 1 John 2:3-4).
 - a) We are “sealed” or given assurance (Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 2 Corinthians 1:22).
 - (1) The meaning of “seal” is “a stamp, a brand, or a guarantee” such as the seal of a state or a government on a document. It is a distinctive mark by which something can be made known.
 - (2) The “seal” of the Holy Spirit on us through the word of truth is the same seal but in different form or action -- upon the apostles it was direct inspiration and power; upon us it is through the word of truth which bears the signature of the Holy Spirit as proof that it is of God.
 - b) Every Christian today is sealed or stamped by the Holy Spirit as he follows its teaching.

Conclusion. The Holy Spirit continues to work through a confirmed revelation to produce conviction, conversion, and sanctification. The Spirit does the work, but He does it through the means of teaching and the medium of the gospel, not through miraculous intervention.

No one should deny that the Spirit dwells in the Christian, but He does not dwell in us literally. The Bible teaches that the Spirit dwells in us through our faith and acceptance of His word. The Spirit can be said to dwell within us as we manifest the Spirit’s influence upon our lives. The fact that we dwell in the Godhead, and that the Godhead dwells in us, shows the closeness of the fellowship that we have with the Godhead.