

The Holy Spirit's Work And Christians Today

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INTRODUCTION:

- A. This evening we are going to bring to a close our study of the Holy Spirit**
1. First of all... let's remind ourselves what we learned in the last lesson
 2. Now the part most really want to know – What role does the Spirit play our lives today?
- B. Before I present this lesson I want to let you know some things you can expect first:**
1. This subject has been the point of much study and disagreement among brethren in the past – Some here may even disagree with some of the points I will make
 2. My goal is to present as clearly and concisely the Spirit's work as revealed in the Bible:
 - a. I am not going to get bogged down in questions that we may not have answers to
 - b. I also will strive not to present you with my opinions of what His work is
 - c. Are there other things that I wonder about? CERTAINLY! But I am committed to preaching only those things I can say clearly & certainly from God's word!

I. COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS CONCERNING HIS WORK TODAY:

- A. Some have a misconception about how the Spirit works in the salvation of men:**
1. Many people today believe in a direct operation of the Spirit in salvation and conversion:
 - a. "The Spirit leads, converts, sanctifies, & saves the sinner by operating directly on his heart in a miraculous way... separate and apart from the God's word!"
 - b. Regardless of what the Bible teaches he knows he is saved! As you talk to him you realize baptism was not a part of it... The Spirit did everything!
 - c. This results in a "better felt than told" religion! One says, "I know I am saved because what I feel in my heart!" or "I had this feeling deep inside me...!"
 - d. One would likely believe that the ONLY way we can do anything that is good & live righteously is that if the Spirit directly changes our hearts!
 2. The foundation for this view of the Holy Spirit's work is found in Calvinism:
 - a. Basic premise seen in TULIP Theory: Total inherited depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints
 - b. To accept this one must believe the Spirit saves & changes men's hearts directly
 - c. Parts and pieces of this set of ideas is found in most denominations today... that is why misconceptions concerning the Spirit's role in salvation is so abundant!
 3. Consider some logical consequences if this was actually true: **(2 Cor 5:10; Acts 10:34)**
 - a. God would be a respecter of persons – Choosing who would be saved
 - b. God would be responsible for any who are saved & to blame for those condemned
 - c. Man would be relieved of any real responsibilities – God has done and will do it all!
 4. The question is not whether or not the Spirit plays a major role in our salvation... the question is one of method – How does He save and change men? **(Titus 3:5)**
 - a. The scriptures clearly teach us that the Spirit plays a major role
 - b. But does the Spirit come in and arbitrarily save man, outside of the word of God and the man's own actions, and then arbitrarily changes his heart & desires?
 - c. In a minute we'll study what the Bible teaches on how the Spirit works in this area
- B. Some believe that the Holy Spirit literally and personally dwells within every Christian:**
1. The Bible certainly speaks of the Spirit dwelling within us! **(1 Cor 6:18-20; 2 Tim 1:14)**
 - a. We are told to take care of our bodies because it is God's temple
 - b. No one can deny the fact that the Spirit dwells within us – the question we are asking is how? Is it a literal & personal indwelling or is it by some other way
 2. But consider some other things or people that can dwell within us:
 - a. Paul said very plainly that Christ lived within him **(Gal 2:20; Rom 8:10-11)**
 - b. God is also spoken of as abiding within us and we abide in Him **(1 John 4:12-16)**
 - c. John writes that the truth lives within us and will be with us forever! **(2 John 1:1-2)**

- d. What we call “The Christian Graces” are supposed to be in us **(2 Peter 1:8)**
- e. The word of Christ is supposed to dwell within us richly **(Col 3:16)**
- 4. The Spirit dwells within us in the same manner all of these others do:
 - a. **Question:** If we do not conclude that these literally and personally dwell within each of us, why conclude the Spirit, with the same language, would do so?
 - b. The Bible clearly teaches this happens: **(Eph 4:6; I Thess 2:13; Eph 3:17)**
 - c. Remember – When the scriptures seem unclear to us we must use scriptures that are more easily understood to explain them! They don’t contradict each other!
- 5. Someone might ask, “Well then... what is the gift of the Holy Spirit?” **(Acts 2:38)**
 - a. **NOTHING** here shows it’s a personal indwelling – It could be His presence, His help, or even a gift that the Holy Spirit gives... The text does not specify!
 - b. Whatever this gift is its for EVERYONE who obeys the gospel whether in that day or in the days and years to follow... up until today **(vs. 39)**
 - c. This does not fit the idea of spiritual gifts of that day – It’s GIFT not GIFTS!
 - d. Due to verse 39, I believe this is the promise of salvation, which the Spirit plays an active role in, but it certainly could include His presence & help! **(Eph 1:13-14)**

II. WHAT DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT DO FOR US TODAY?

A. It is very clear that a major way in which He works is through the written word:

- 1. It is through the preaching of the gospel the Spirit reaches & changes men!
 - a. It is always the preaching of the gospel that produces faith in people **(Rom 10:17)**
 - b. The sword of the Spirit is the word of God – It is this word, it’s message, that pricks hearts and causes men to change their lives! **(Eph. 6:17; Hebrews 4:12)**
 - c. **Chart:** A look at what reached and changed people in the First Century
 - d. The Spirit does not miraculously save a person and change their hearts apart from the word of God! He still works to save men today... by the word He revealed!
- 2. It’s through the written word that we develop “fruits of the Spirit” **(Gal. 5:22-24)**
 - a. The Spirit revealed these “fruits” to us, reveals why we should develop them in our lives, and revealed how to go about developing them in God’s word
 - b. They are also fruits that would be characteristic of the Spirit of God Himself
 - c. Note: “Those who have crucified the flesh” – Not the Spirit directly changed
- 3. We also are led by the Spirit and walk in Him: **(Gal. 5:16; Rom 8:14 – Eph. 3:5)**
 - a. **Illustration:** “The Spirit led me to do this...” or “I felt the Spirit telling me to do this....” or “I just get up and the Spirit will tell me what to say”
 - b. Wouldn’t the Spirit lead us today as we study His instructions and follow them?
 - c. Notice how the perpetuating of the gospel was to occur after the apostles... they didn’t expect the Spirit to lead others in the same way! **(2 Tim 2:2)**
- 4. There are many things the Spirit is said to do that God’s word is also spoken of as doing:
 - a. **Chart:** Comparison of what the Spirit does and what the word of God does
 - b. **Illustration:** Dave Ramsey writes “Financial Peace.” People read it and straighten out their finances... He did it but how? Directly? No, through his book!
 - c. What we can know for sure is the Spirit works these things through God’s word!
- 5. Finally, we read about how the Spirit bears witness with our spirit **(Romans 8:16-17)**
 - a. This is not some “fuzzy feeling” within us – We compare the Holy Spirit’s testimony with our own testimony of our lives and that shows us exactly what we are!
 - b. This happens as we know we’ve done what the Spirit says to become God’s child and we know we are striving to live how the Spirit tells us to live
 - c. James compares this process to a man looking into a mirror **(James 1:23-25)**

B. The Holy Spirit works on our behalf in our prayers to the Father:

- 1. Paul writes about the Spirit’s work to give assurance to suffering Christians! **(Rm 8:26-27)**
 - a. Those who believe that the Holy Spirit ONLY works today through prayer have a very difficult time answering this passage! How do you explain this one?
 - b. Consider their circumstance we learn from this context **(Rom 8:17-18, 35-36)**
 - c. By knowing the Spirits work in prayer these Christians received great comfort!

2. To fully understand what Paul is saying, let's first identify who the pronouns refer to:
 - a. The "we" refers to Paul & he is including the Roman Christians, thus all Christians
 - b. It says in verse 26 – "The Spirit himself" → Another noun is not introduced to change the person the pronoun is modifying – It would be the Spirit
 - c. So, the Holy Spirit who searches hearts knows what the mind of our spirit is (what we're thinking) because the Holy Spirit is making intercession for us
3. The Holy Spirit's work is a work of pleading on our behalf when we pray!
 - a. Remember, Paul is writing about times when we're weak bearing trials & tribulation
 - b. There may be times under such circumstances that we know we need God's help, we want to pray and ask for help, but we just don't know what to say to God!
 - c. This is where the Spirit comes in – He searches our hearts & minds and presents our needs before God that we are unable to express correctly in words!
 - d. Maybe a loved one dies, a family member is sick, our health is failing, others have disappointed us, temptations, we are persecuted for doing what's right
 - e. This is great assurance! Don't worry about your weakness through ignorance or an inadequacy to express your thoughts... You have the Holy Spirit!

C. There may be other things which the Holy Spirit does today, but we cannot be sure:

1. In the last lesson we showed how the Holy Spirit had an interest not only in the revelation of the gospel of Christ but also in its spread!
 - a. His interest is seen as He persuaded some, like Peter, to take the gospel to others
 - b. He also worked to connect those who needed the gospel with those who preached the gospel – As in the case of Philip and the Etheopian Eunuch
 - c. There is no reason to say that the Spirit's interest in the spread of the gospel has ceased today – But how he would work in these ways is not revealed
2. Could the Spirit do other things we are not aware of? Could it be that we don't fully understand all the Bible says about His work today? Very possible!
3. But, let's not be the type who love questions & not answers! **(2 Tim 2:22-23; Acts 17:21)**
 - a. Some people have a Holy Spirit "obsession" – That's all they want to talk and study about – They love to focus on what the Spirit MAY do that we aren't sure of
 - b. Some seek only to ask questions about His work today... Not because they are in search of answers but because they are fascinated with "some new thing"
 - c. Let's always be open to re-examining what we believe always look to deepen our understanding of Him out of an appreciation of Him and a love for the truth!
4. Obsessive pursuits of the unknown have be the beginning of some taking positions that contradict what the scriptures teach simply and clearly!

CONCLUSION: The Holy Spirit has worked and continues to work in marvelous ways in our lives... let's never fail to recognize Him, His works, and be thankful for what He does for us!