

An Overview of the Holy Spirit

2 Corinthians 1:21-22

Last week we began our study of 2 Corinthians with Paul talking about spiritual battles and the comforting ministry of God. This week, Paul gives us an overview of how the Holy Spirit is the Agent in that comforting.

In these verses, we have at the very least suggested, every operation of the Holy Spirit that is revealed to us throughout the New Testament. There is absolutely no ministry of the Holy Spirit, as far as the believer is concerned, that is not touched on here. In the Revised Version there is a slight change which helps to make it clearer, "Now He which established us with you into Christ, and hath anointed us, is God." The New Living Translation says, "It is God who gives us, along with you, the ability to stand firm for Christ. He has commissioned us, and he has identified us as his own by placing the Holy Spirit in our hearts as the first installment of everything he will give us." That is exactly what we have been told in Ephesians 1:11-14, "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his own will. That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ; in whom you also trusted, after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also after that you believed, you were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Who is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."

In these verses Paul deals, either directly or indirectly, with three very definite operations of the Holy Spirit. He deals, *first of all*, with *conviction*, or *sanctification* by the Spirit. *Secondly*, he deals with the *new birth* by the Spirit through the Word. **And thirdly, he deals with the baptism of the Holy Spirit.** All these operations are involved in

the establishment of a believer into Christ. No one is in Christ by natural birth.

You will remember he has already told us in 1 Corinthians 15:22, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." **All men naturally are in Adam.** To be in Adam means that we have received life from Adam. He was our federal head; we belong by nature to Adam's race, and that entire race is under judgment because of sin. **To be in Christ means that we have received life from Christ, and that He, the risen exalted One in heaven, is the Head of a new race, a new creation to which we now belong.** The steps by which we enter into that new creation are laid down very clearly in the Word.

First of all, no one would ever come to Christ if it were not for the convicting, sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit of God. Unless the Spirit of God awakens a man, unless the Spirit of God brings him to see his lost condition, convicts him of the tremendous truths of Holy Scripture, no man would ever of himself turn to Christ. That is a very solemn fact, but it is a fact nevertheless. Romans 9:16 gives us this insight, "It is not of him that desires, nor of him that works, but of God who shows mercy." On the other hand, it is quite possible for the Spirit of God to operate in convicting power on the heart of man and yet that man do what the Jews did in Stephen's day, as seen in Acts 7:51, "You have always resisted the Holy Spirit."

So it is possible to be convicted by the Spirit and yet to resist the Spirit. But Jesus also teaching us in John 16:7-8 that there must be the convicting work of the Spirit of God or no one would ever come to Christ, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. And when He is come, He will reprove (or convict) the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." **Conviction is far more than a mere broken heart over sin.** People often confound conviction with broken heartedness. Such a breakdown may be there, and that is not a bad thing. **The truth of the**

matter is that most of us are so cold and stony-hearted that it is refreshing to see people break down and weep over their sins. There must be: first a recognition of one's utterly lostness without Christ. Therefore, the Spirit of God has come to convict of *sin*, of *righteousness*, and of *judgment*.

Jesus continues in verse 9, "Of sin, because they do not believe on Me." **The great damning sin that is sending men down to perdition is the rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ.** We are *not* told that the Spirit of God was sent particularly to convict men of sins of the flesh and sins of a general character. Every man's conscience convicts him of the sinfulness of licentiousness, of immoral living, of lying, of drunkenness, of pride and vanity, and all these other things.

The Holy Spirit came to convict of the sin of rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ. God took the entire sin question into account when the Lord Jesus Christ hung on Calvary's cross, and because of what Christ did then and there, Romans 3:26 tells us that God is able to "be just and the Justifier of he who believes in Jesus." But if men reject the Lord Jesus Christ, if men refuse to put their trust in Him, they have to go on to judgment, to face their own sins when they will be judged, every man according to his works. Some men rather pride themselves on their morality, on their respectability, and say, "I am really a pretty good person. In fact, I probably live a better life than some of those people who go to church every Sunday." **My question to those people is simple: Have you received the Lord Jesus Christ, God's blessed Son, as your own personal Savior?** If not, you are guilty of the worst sin that anyone can possibly commit, for God has given Heaven's best, in sending His blessed Son to earth to bleed and die for your redemption. Can there be any greater sin, any worse offense in the eyes of a holy God, than to reject that Savior, to trample on His grace, and spurn His loving-kindness?

It is the work of the Spirit of God to convict men of the sin of the rejection of Christ, and then to convict of righteousness. That is,

to show men that though they have no righteousness of their own God has provided one for them in His risen Son. And so the apostle cries in Philippians 3:9, "I would be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

The Holy Spirit comes to convict of judgment. Not merely of judgment to come, but of the fact that this world is already under judgment, and that every believer is brought out from that judgment, and is raised up with this risen Christ, and so is called to walk apart from the world. Jesus said this in John 16:11, "Because the prince of this world is judged." Satan is the prince of this world, and at the cross the prophecy of Genesis 3:15 was fulfilled, "He shall bruise your head, and you shalt bruise his heel." **At the cross Satan bruised the heel of the Son of God, but there his own head was bruised, and now he is a judged prince, and the entire scene that recognizes his authority is under judgment.** You and I are called by grace to step out from it all and take our place with the Christ whom the world rejected.

Scripture sometimes uses another term for the convicting work of the Spirit of God; it speaks of the sanctification of the Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 6:11 Paul mentions some very ungodly people, and then he says, "And such were some of you: but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

Sanctification means to be set apart. Do you still remember when you were part of this ungodly world? Do you still remember when you lived for the world and for self, and then the hour came when earthly things began to lose its appeal to you, you lost your appetite for the pleasures of the world and you were deeply concerned about your sinful and lost condition. Do you still remember thinking to yourself, "I can't go on living this way; I want something better for my life than what I am living"? And through someone's invitation, or through

some song, or through some sermon, you came to Christ and believing in Him you were justified.

That was the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit of God that led you to Christ. When people come to Christ, when the Spirit of God leads them to His blessed feet and they believe the gospel, what takes place? According to 1 Peter 1:23 they are immediately born again, “not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides for ever.”

Jesus put it this way in John 3:5, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” **People get confused about the water in that verse.** They imagine sometimes that it means baptism, but Christian baptism had not been instituted when the Lord Jesus used those words. The best way to find out what it means is to go through John's writings and see how he speaks of water. You remember Jesus said to the woman at the well, “Whosoever drinks of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” **Whatever water means in John 3 it means exactly the same in John 4, and Jesus is not talking about drinking the water of baptism.** Even when we are immersed we close our lips; we do not drink the water. But He is speaking of another kind of water altogether. We read in Revelation 22:17, “Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.” **What is the water of life?** It is the offer of life that Jesus gives, the message that we have here in the Word of God. That Word has cleansing and refreshing power, and Titus 3:5 tells us when we receive the Word in the simplicity of faith we are regenerated “by the washing of regeneration; and renewing of the Holy Spirit.”

So then, the Spirit convicts, sanctifies, and regenerates through the Word, and more than that, the Spirit puts us into the Body of Christ. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 12:12, “By one Spirit are we all baptized into one Body.” There was a time when we lived our life with

the idea that we really did not need anyone but ourselves. But when we were saved, the Holy Spirit began to show us, through the Word, that we are part of the Body and that we really do need each other. We are members of that one Body of which our Lord Jesus Christ is the Head. That is what it is to be established into Christ.

And then notice that Paul talks about the anointing of the Holy Spirit. He simply says, "And has anointed us." The anointing is for service and illumination. You remember in Old Testament times three kinds of people were anointed with oil: prophets, priests, and kings; and oil is the recognized type of the Holy Spirit.

After His baptism in the Jordan, Jesus was anointed by God with the Holy Ghost and with power. When the Spirit of God descended upon Him in a special way, that was His anointing for His threefold office. He was *Prophet* on earth, He is *Priest* in Heaven, and He will be *King* when He comes again, and this blessed ministry is all in the power of the Holy Spirit. Though our Lord Jesus Christ was God, yet as to His Manhood He chose to do all His works in the Spirit's power, and so as believers we are anointed by the Spirit, and even the youngest believer has this anointing. You may have been converted only a day or two ago, but the Spirit of God now dwells in you as the anointing, and when you want instruction and power for service, look up to God that He by the Spirit may give you the instruction you need through the Word, and that He may empower you to serve Him.

Paul also draws our attention to the Holy Spirit's sealing. He says, "Who hath also sealed us." A seal speaks of ownership. The same Holy Spirit who regenerated us, who baptized us into the Body of Christ, who is our anointing for service and our illumination, dwells within us as the seal that we belong to God. The seal is the mark that we belong to God. As we have seen in Ephesians 1:13, the Bible says, "After that you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." And again we are told in Ephesians 4:30, "Grieve not

the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption."

Notice two things: first, how clearly it brings out the personality of the Holy Spirit. You cannot grieve anything that is not personal. You can grieve those you love the most by bad behavior or coldness or indifference; and so, you may grieve the Holy Spirit of God. **The Holy Spirit dwells in you to claim you for Christ, and if you are careless in your life as a believer, allowing worldliness or carnality or anything that is un-Christlike a place in your life, you are grieving the Holy Spirit of God.** Look at what we have been told, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." This suggests the *abiding presence* of the Holy Spirit of God. **Philippians 1:6** says, "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Jesus said in John 14:16 that when the Holy Spirit is come, He shall "abide with you for ever." **The happy Christian is the one living in the power of an ungrieved Spirit.**

The apostle adds, in closing this passage, "And given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." **The Holy Spirit dwelling within us is the earnest (the guarantee) of that full blessing which we are to have at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto Him.**

The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit is a Person, and, as a believer, He lives in you. Let Him have His way in everything, and there will be a life of victory and blessing. **That is what it means to "be filled with the Holy Spirit."**