

The Spirit-Empowered Work in Gospel Transformation

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Plenary Session

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This session will focus on the ministry of the Holy Spirit as the agent of change in the counselee's life. The Spirit illumines the mind of the Christian counselee (Eph 1:18-23), convicts the heart of the unbelieving counselee (John 16:8-11), and enables the counselor (Rom 15:14). He provides the counselor with the required discernment to present truth to those in need. The session will also investigate the dynamic role of the Spirit as the Paraclete in the life of biblical ministry (John 16:7) as the Helper, Counselor, and Comforter.

- **What is the role of the Spirit in the Christian life?**

The Spirit's indwelling and transformation make us OVERCOMERS (1 John 5:1-5)

What makes the believer an Overcomer?

1. Born of God (out of God born) v.4
2. Saving Belief v.1 cf. John 20:31
3. They receive the benefits of salvation
 - a. They partake of the tree of life (Rev 2:7)
 - b. They avoid the second death (2:11)
 - c. They partake of the spiritual food of heaven (2:17; cf. John 6:50f)
 - d. They will rule with Christ (2:26-27)
 - e. They have Christ as an advocate (3:5)

How does it occur?

1. Christ's greatness (1 John 4:4)
2. Our faith (Eph 2:8,9)
3. Christ's sacrifice (John 19:30)

Gospel Transformation Causes Spiritual Realization

1. We realize that victory is in Christ (2 Tim 1:10; Col 2:15; 1 Cor 15:55-57)
2. We realize our acceptance is based on the work of Christ, not our performance
 - This is the doctrine of justification applied
3. We accept the fact that salvation cannot be lost

One of the great battles of the mind is the insecurity the enemy seeks to gain in reference to the security of salvation.

- Eternal life is a possession: John 3:15-16, 36; 4:14; 5:24; 6:40, 47; 1 John 5:11-13.
 - Eternal life is secure based on the power of God: 1 Peter 1:5; 1 Cor 1:8
 - Eternal life is a promise: John 10:27; Eph 1:13; 4:30
 - Eternal life is the will of God: John 6:39-40
 - Eternal life is bound to an eternal plan: Romans 8:29-30
4. We know that we are capable of spiritual success (Josh 1:8; Phil 4:13)
 5. We have comfort amid difficulties (2 Cor 1:3-7; 1 Peter 4:12-14)
 6. We have a hope for the future (Eph 4:4; Col 1:27; 1 Thess 5:8)
 7. We have a proper object of faith—Christ

What is illumination, and why is it important?

- A brief look at Ephesians 1:18-23
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- It can be established that illumination is a process that occurs in the effectual call and in sanctification. In the effectual call, the Spirit convicts men of their spiritual bankruptcy, allowing them to see their condition, and moving irresistibly in granting faith that results in salvation. There is also a general illumination that is an act of common grace. This illumination is ultimately suppressed by the non-elect.
- The Spirit uses the propositional truths of the Word to reveal the nature and plan of God to the lost and saved. The persuasive nature of preaching and counseling is consistent with the role of the Spirit to present irrefutable evidence to the world.
- Counseling and teaching that lacks Messianic emphasis cannot be consistent with the role of the Spirit to exalt the Lord as the only means of hope and salvation (Acts 4:12).
- However, Christ-exalting messages cannot penetrate the heart of men without the dynamic of the Spirit, who alone can make the message effective in the hearers. This event of illumination may take several courses, but all have the result of glorifying the Son.
- The ministry of the Spirit through propositional counseling and preaching clarifies the revelation committed in Scripture. This revelation is the foundation for convicting the

world and calling it to repentance and for calling the church to holiness. Since the Spirit is the One who would speak of Christ, this would include all doctrines that address His Person and work. It also includes the teaching that provides the church with the spiritual nourishment it needs to fulfill its duty to God.

The Transformational Relationship of the Word and Spirit

- The Spirit and the Word are conjoined to accomplish a divine end—bringing men to faith and confounding the wisdom of the world. It is the wisdom of the world that decided against the Righteous One and chose a murderer to be released. And, it is the Spirit who acts as the constant reminder of the foolishness of this assessment and decision. The Spirit's ministry takes place in orally shared and written Word.
- The Spirit is joined to biblical counseling and preaching, in that, the Spirit gives an account of the revelation of God contained in Scripture—the Spirit convicts the hearts of those whom it confronts as to the veracity of the message, and the spiritual condition of those confronted.
- Paul's imagery of the Sword of the Spirit (Eph 6:17) is one of the Spirit welding the Word to accomplish divine purposes in the world and church. The Spirit and the Word both retain an inherent power, yet, by divine order are so joined for sovereign purposes.
- The Thessalonians experienced the power of this dynamic when the Word joined with the powerful presence of the Spirit and secured their salvation (1 Thess 1:5). In Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, he recalls the ministry of the Spirit as it was joined with the Word to convict and saved his readers.

1 Thessalonians 1:5 for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as

you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.
(NASB95)

The demonstration of the power of God is in the gospel that transforms the heart of men (Rom 1:16) and makes those who were once alienated and at enmity with God sons (5:1; 8, 10). This can obviously only occur as the message of Christ is proclaimed (10:9-13).

It is through this medium that the Holy Spirit joins Himself to the message of Christ, making it effective in the lives of the elect for salvation and the non-elect for judgment.

In 2 Cor 6:6,7 Paul shows the relationship of the Spirit and the power of God.

The relationship of Scripture and the Spirit is a natural one for several reasons.

First, because the Spirit of truth He is the author (2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Pet 1:20, 21) and defender of that which is truth (John 17:17). Paul reminds us that he did not come to those at Corinth with persuasive words, but *demonstrating power*. The power came through his words and actions and was only effective as he depended upon the Spirit of God to use him (1 Cor 2:4; 2 Cor 13:4). Again, the connection is evident—the Spirit prepares and uses those who speak the Word for effective service in ministry and as instruments in His ministry of conviction.

John 14:12 is another indicator of the relationship of the Word and the ministry of conviction. Jesus tells his disciples that they will do greater works than He because he goes to the Father. Which works is the Lord referring? One work that the disciples would do that would surpass that of the Lord is preaching the gospel to the world. Once they were empowered by the Spirit they would extend the ministry of Christ by being the seedling of Christ's commission to take the gospel to the world.

In the farewell discourse, He informs them that the Spirit will teach them and bring to “remembrance” all that He said to them. The Spirit would remind them of His words and His message to the world...the Spirit has no message of His own; His message is that of Christ Savior, crucified, and raised from the dead (John 16:13, 14). Without the Spirit, the words would not be remembered and there would no message to confront the world.

The writer of Hebrews reminded his readers of the efficacy of the Word (Heb 4:12), which can be both shared and written. The Spirit is not as some who reacted to radicals in the Reformation proposed, enclosed in the Word. The Spirit stands separate as deity and omnipotent, yet with the Word to effect sovereign results.

Spurgeon preached on the Sword of the Spirit, and expressed his conviction that the Spirit used the Word to bring about His sovereign will in the hearts of men:

- The Word, we say, is the only sword which the Spirit uses. I know the Holy Ghost uses gracious sermons; but it is only in proportion as they have the Word *of God* in them. I know the Holy Ghost uses religious books; but only so far as they are the Word *of God* told out in other language. Conviction, conversion, and consolation still are wrought, and only by the Word *of God*. . . . In contending against the powers of darkness, "The sword of the Spirit is the Word *of God*." "It is written" is his master-stroke. Words which God has spoken by holy men of old, and has caused to be recorded on the sacred page—these are the battle-axe and weapons of war of his Spirit (C. H. Spurgeon, "The Sword of the Spirit, 1891," A sermon delivered at The Metropolitan Tabernacle, <https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/the-sword-of-the-spirit/#flipbook/> Accessed May 1, 2023).

Concluding Thoughts on Counseling and Gospel Transformation

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