

The Holy Spirit in Conviction, Conversion, and Sanctification

Introduction:

- 1) My challenge is to explain the role of the Holy Spirit in the conviction and conversion of sinners and then His part in the sanctification of the saved.
- 2) To put it another way, deal with the meaning of passages such as **Jn. 16:8; 1 Cor. 6:11; 1 Pet. 1:2;** et al.
- 3) I'm convinced my job would be much easier if it were not for the work of two men; viz. Augustine and Calvin.
 - a) Time doesn't permit a detailed examination of total depravity and the bondage of the human will, but this is at the root of so much that I believe to be error on the work of the Holy Spirit.

I. CONVICTION AND CONVERSION IN CALVINISM.

1. John Piper provides a good illustration of what Calvinists believe on this subject.
 - a. "Since men are blinded to the worth of Christ, a miracle is needed in order for them to come to see and believe. Paul compares this miracle with the first day of creation when God said, 'Let there be light.' It is in fact a new creation, or a new birth. This is what is meant by the effectual call in 1 Corinthians 1:24."
"Those who are called have their eyes opened by the sovereign creative power of God so that they no longer see the cross as foolishness but as the power and the wisdom of God. The effectual call is the miracle of having our blindness removed. This is irresistible grace."¹
2. N.L. Rice.
 - a. The Campbell-Rice Debate: "In conversion and sanctification there is an influence of the Spirit in addition to that of the Word, and distinct from it—an influence, without which the arguments and motives of the gospel would never convert and sanctify one of Adam's ruined race."²
 - b. Why, then, it will be asked, is it necessary that there should be an influence of the Spirit, in addition to that of the word, and distinct from it? The necessity arises simply from the depravity of the human heart."²
3. J.B. Moody in The Nashville Debate with J.A. Harding.
 - a. "The Scriptures teach that man is so depraved that he is unable without a direct enabling power of the Holy Spirit to obey the gospel of the Son of God."²
4. A brother in Athens, AL three years ago.
 - a. "If you're not a Christian, . . . what you need this morning, is you need to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. You need to be immersed in the Holy Spirit so that your eyes can be opened, so that you can

see the glory of Christ, so that you can turn from darkness, which is repentance, so that you can confess Him with your mouth, so that you will submit to water baptism.”³

II. SANCTIFICATION IN CALVINISM AND MODERN THOUGHT.

A. Defining Sanctification.

1. **Sanctification**, or in its verbal form, **sanctify**, literally means “to set apart” for special use or purpose, that is, to make holy or sacred. Therefore, sanctification refers to the state or process of being set apart, i.e. made holy. In systematic theology, the term often carries a technical meaning that differs from the biblical word group.¹ Sanctification is regularly equated with the Christian life. In Wesleyan theology, it can refer to a moment of “Entire Sanctification,” in which one reaches a state of Christian Perfection.⁴
2. Biblically speaking we are sanctified or made holy when we become Christians (**1 Cor. 6:11; 1:2**), but it is also an ongoing process. **2 Cor. 7:1**
3. In common speech it is used to refer most often to the Christian’s daily walk as he seeks to become more holy and closer to God.
 - a. I’m going to broaden my lesson to include various aspects of the Spirit’s role in daily living.

B. J. I. Packer on Illumination.

1. “It is not a giving of new revelation, but a work within us that enables us to grasp and to love the revelation that is there before us in the Biblical text as heard and read, and as explained by teachers and writers...As by inspiration he provided Scripture truth for us, so now by illumination he interprets it to us. Illumination is thus the applying of God’s revealed truth to our hearts, so that we grasp as reality for ourselves what the sacred text sets forth”⁵

C. Francis Chan.⁶

1. “Scripture tells us that that the Spirit not only inspired the Bible, but also illumines it for us today (1 Cor. 2:12-16 and 2 Tim. 3:16).”
2. “God wants us to listen to His Spirit on a daily basis, and even throughout the day, as difficult and stretching moments arise, and in the midst of the mundane. My hope is that instead of searching for ‘God’s will for my life,’ each of us would learn to seek hard after ‘the Spirit’s leading in my life today.’ May we learn to pray for an open and willing heart, to surrender to the Spirit’s leading with that friend, child, spouse, circumstance, or decision in our lives right now.”
3. “The Holy Spirit is present throughout the New Testament as well as the Old Testament. I believe in Him because I believe the Scriptures. But even if you took away what I ‘know’ about the Holy

Spirit from reading the Scriptures, my ‘right answers’ about the Holy Spirit, I would still believe. I would still believe in the Spirit because I have experienced God the Holy Spirit working in and through and around my life in ways I cannot deny or ignore. I certainly do not advocate ignoring the Scriptures or basing everything on experience, but to completely ignore experience—including your personal experience and the experience of the wider body of Christ, both now and historically—is unbiblical.”

4. “Then something happened. I am not one of those people who often hears God’s distinct, clear voice (though I know some people do), but on this night, the Spirit of God said to me: I want you to love them as your own children. This was overwhelming to me.”

D. Beth Moore.

1. “And this came as a direct revelation of the Spirit, because this would never have come to me. I know God spoke this over me as he began turning through a concordance in my mind and I started thinking about one Scripture after another”⁷

E. John Piper.

1. This is why we believe in eternal security--namely, the eternal security of the elect. the [sic] implication is that God will so work that those whom he has chosen for eternal salvation will be enabled by him to persevere in faith to the end and fulfill, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the requirements for obedience.⁸
2. “But verse 16 says that a person is sanctified by the Holy Spirit, not just by the preaching of the gospel. So the other side of the triangle is the power of the Holy Spirit flowing out from God’s grace and opening the person’s heart to receive the gospel (Acts 16:14). Sanctification happens when the gospel preached and the Spirit poured out meet with power in the human heart.”⁹

F. The Church of the Nazarene.¹⁰

1. “We believe that entire sanctification is that act of God, subsequent to regeneration, by which believers are made free from original sin, or depravity, and brought into a state of entire devotement to God, and the holy obedience of love made perfect.”
2. The Manual speaks of “...the abiding indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, empowering the believer for life and service.”

G. Jim Davis.

1. *The sanctifying work of God’s Holy Spirit is the only thing that makes our obedience to the truth possible.* There is no substitute for believing the truth the Holy Spirit has revealed, but there

is no power to obey the truth apart from the Holy Spirit's presence.

Salvation is through the Holy Spirit's Supernatural Power

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in us sounds mysterious, but it is no more mysterious than your soul giving life to your body. When your soul returns to God you die. It is not something we fully understand, but we do comprehend it through faith.

Jesus said that the Spirit is like the wind, we do not know where it comes or where it is going, but we understand its powerful influence in our lives. You don't have to understand everything there is to know about the wind to go sailing. To sail you just learn to harness the winds power in the sails. Too many of our lives more nearly resemble the motorboat—they are man-driven.

The Holy Spirit's sanctifying work in our lives of necessity has to be an ongoing work that goes beyond simply putting us into the body of Christ. The Spirit has baptized us into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13), but he continues to sanctify our lives. Paul saw the work of Christ giving him strength to empower him in his service to the Lord. Paul writes, *"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service"* (1 Timothy 1:12 NIV). It is obvious throughout the New Testament that Christ empowers us through the work of the Holy Spirit.¹¹

H. A Facebook Exchange with a Young Christian.

1. "The Scriptures teach that we are taught to love by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in...this verse from Romans 5:5 ('the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit'),.... I believe that most of the verses you listed defend this as well. OF COURSE the Spirit teaches us to love through His written instruction. But the power to carry out these instructions, the power to interpret and apply them in our specific situations -that power is not from us. It never has been in us. We submit our will to God and His Spirit and he gives us the power to carry out His will."¹²

I. Direct Communication from God to Christians.

1. In talking about fasting the implication is that God will speak to us: "The early church did it. Their worship was coupled with their fasting and directly connected to the leading of the Holy Spirit. *"While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'* Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off." Acts 13:2-3
"The Holy Spirit spoke, directing their ministry, while they were worshiping and fasting. That's pretty huge."¹³

2. “A little over a year ago God placed an invitation on my heart. My oldest son was going to be traveling to D.C. I was looking for a place to stay and the message was placed in me, ‘Come. Alone.’ I spent the week hidden in the hills of the Shenandoah mountains of Virginia, in a monastery, watching Trappist Monks gracefully execute a life of quiet solitude with their God. Even the guests of the house are discouraged from uttering a word. I spent a week in silence.”¹³
3. “Several days into the trip three of my dearest friends texted me in a matter of an hour or two. One who was thinking of me. One who was praying for me. And one who said God simply put me and Azaiah on her heart a lot the past few days.
“These women dropped what they were doing the moment my son died. They left their homes, their lives, their own children and came to me. They carried me in those first days and seven months later they haven’t put me down.
“They are truly the best friends I have ever known. But in the big picture it’s not even about them. It is about God using their willing hands and hearts to speak to me. It took me a minute to get the message God was sending the other day. But he spoke it clearly.
“‘I see you. I know. You don’t have to carry this alone.’ He said it again and again. ‘I see you. I know. You don’t have to carry this alone.’” He said it louder.
“**I SEE YOU! I KNOW! YOU DON’T HAVE TO CARRY THIS ALONE.**”
“As I struggled in my anxiety and my fear and my loneliness, God was packing little bags with my burdens and passing them out to the women who told him they’d carry it for me.” (Emphasis hers—JRG)¹⁴
4. Facebook discussion.¹⁵
 - a. Daniel DeGarmo posed the following on Facebook.
“Question for discussion. Does God communicate to us today outside of the Bible?
An important qualification: We're not talking REVELATION or the revealing of new information - surely the divinely inspired word of God is all sufficient for life and godliness. This is obviously a very personal issue for me as I believe I had an unexplainable experience in the moments following my son's death. Thanks for your contribution to this topic.”
 - b. There were many responses, but they included the following.
Serena DeGarmo He is God. He gets to do whatever he wants to do.
Gardner Hall God's word is quick and powerful and sharper than any two edged sword. It is absolutely and unequivocally sufficient for every need. Therefore no revelation is needed through dreams, hunches, burdens on the heart or any other subjective sources.

Daniel DeGarmo Gardner...God doesn't 'need' to answer our prayers or really 'need' to do anything but that doesn't necessitate that He doesn't, does it? And I agree that no revelation is needed.

Serena DeGarmo His sheep hear his voice and follow. John 10:27

If a stranger calls my name I know it is stranger. If it's one of my parents, I know because I am theirs. This is so simple to me.

Mell William Schaer I guess my point is God gave us his word, but his word is not everything. God moves and exist outside his word. Job chapter 38 talks about all the unknown stuff that God knows. Lets not put our God in a comfy cozy box. I have heard his voice and dreamed dreams that moved me in directions he needed me to go. None of these things were outside of his reveled [sic] word, but believe me I heard them all the same.¹⁵

III. BIBLICAL CONVICTION AND CONVERSION.

A. How Does the Holy Spirit Convict and Convert?

1. Jesus promised His apostles that He would be sent for this purpose. **Jn. 16:7-13**
2. And I believe the remainder of the NT shows us that this was done by the preaching of the gospel.
 - a. Sin. **Rom. 1:18—3:23; Acts 2:37**
 - b. Righteousness. **Rom. 1:17; Acts 24:25**
 - c. Judgment. **Acts 17:30f; 24:25**

B. The Holy Spirit Works Through the Gospel.

1. The Holy Spirit revealed the faith-producing gospel. **Rom. 10:14-17; cf. Lk. 8:12.**
2. The gospel proclaimed by people saved souls. **Rom. 1:16**
 - a. Though miraculous elements were sometimes present, the conversions always came by preaching. Acts 2, 8, 9, 10, 16, et al.
3. The one time Holy Spirit baptism took place with ones not yet Christians, the purpose was not to open their eyes, but in a sense to open the eyes of some who were already Christians. **Acts 10:44-48; 11:13-18**
4. Paul was told that his preaching would be that which would open eyes and lead men to repentance. **Acts 26:15-20**
 - a. When we read of Lydia's heart being opened, why assume it was anything other than that which Jesus had told Paul would happen? **Acts 16:13-15**
5. The word, which was revealed by the Spirit to the apostles and prophets (**Eph. 3:3-5**), saves. **Js. 1:18, 21; 1 Pet. 1:22f**

6. As we will see in the next point, this can be accomplished because man is not totally depraved and in need of a miracle to believe.

IV. THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE WORD.

A. Even Sinners Are Capable of Being Reasoned With.

1. In both conversion and sanctification (growth), the apostles expected man to be able to use his reasoning powers to understand.
2. Reasoned from the Scriptures with unbelievers. **Acts 17:2**
3. Reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and judgment to come. **Acts 24:25**
4. Read and understand. **Eph. 3:3-5**

B. To Speak Highly of the Word Is to Honor the Spirit, Not Forget Him.

1. God testified by His Spirit in the prophets. **Neh. 9:30**
2. The Holy Spirit spoke by the mouth of David. **Acts 1:16**
3. To resist the Spirit is to reject the messengers of God. **Acts 7:51-53**
4. The Holy Spirit witnesses to us through His words. **Heb. 10:15-17**
5. The sword of the Spirit is the word of God. **Eph. 6:17**
6. In several places, the Holy Spirit and the word are said to accomplish or be responsible for the same things.
 - a. The new birth is attributed to both the word and the Spirit. **Jn. 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:22f**
 - b. The washing of water by the word in **Eph. 5:26** corresponds to the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit in **Titus 3:5**.
 - c. Being filled with the Spirit (**Eph. 5:18f**) is equated with allowing the word of Christ to dwell richly in one. **Col. 3:16**
 - d. **Eph. 3:16's** strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man seems to correspond to the prayer in **Col. 1:9-11** that they be filled with the knowledge of His will and strengthened with all might.

V. THE COMPLETENESS OF GOD'S GUIDANCE.

A. The Scriptures Are Sufficient and God's Final Revelation.

1. The various ways God once spoke are contrasted with the message spoken through His Son. **Heb. 1:1f; 2:1-4**
2. Once for all delivered. **Jude 1:3**
3. Every good work. **2 Tim. 3:16f**

4. In **Jn. 16:12f** the completeness of truth was promised to a group of men living in the first century.
 - a. All truth had to be revealed before those men perished.
 - b. Near the end of his life John urged his readers to stay with what they had heard from the beginning. **1 Jn. 2:24**

B. Gardner Hall and Gary Gilley.

1. Hall: “Gary Gilley points out that when Paul wrote his last letter to Timothy, ‘he did not encourage Timothy to focus on new revelations, impressions, feelings on hunches, Rather he continually turned him to the Word of God and the doctrines contained therein’ (2 Tim. 2:2-14; 3:15-17; 4:2-4).”¹⁶
2. Hall: “While many give lip service to the sufficiency of the scriptures, their references to knowing God’s will through perceived answers to prayers, ‘providential nudges,’ hunches and the like reveal that they aren’t quite satisfied with them.”¹⁷
3. Gilley: “While never denying the authority of Scripture as such, many from people in the pew to key leaders, regularly point to mystical experiences as the basis of much of what they do and believe.”¹⁸

VI. THE TEMPLE AS MOTIVATION.

1. The question of how the Spirit dwells in a Christian will be discussed in a different lecture, but I would offer that the Christian as a temple is presented to us as motivation and not empowerment.
2. To those threatening to cause division. **1 Cor. 3:16f**
3. Reason to avoid sexual immorality. **1 Cor. 6:18f**
4. Separate yourselves, be clean. **2 Cor. 6:14—7:1**
5. The Gentiles were to appreciate the mystery now revealed—i.e. they too could be God’s special people. **Eph. 2:19-22**
6. To those familiar with Ezek. 8-11, the motivational nature of God’s dwelling would have been clear.
 - a. The Lord will not continue to dwell in a defiled temple, but just as it was up to the inhabitants of Jerusalem then to preserve its holiness, it is we today who must keep the temple holy.

VI. DANGERS.

1. To believe in direct messages, illumination, or divine nudges presents many dangers.
2. Truth becomes very subjective and opens us up to deception.
 - a. Truth is no longer determined by abiding in His word. **Jn. 8:31f**
 - b. Do we not see that the heart can be deceitful? **Jer. 17:9**

- c. We become very susceptible to lying wonders and deceiving spirits. **2 Th. 2:9-12; 1 Kgs. 22:19-23**
 - d. Those claiming and convinced they are guided by the Spirit teach and practice contradictory doctrines.
- 3. We are never certain about things.
 - 4. Belief in direct guidance leads to arrogance and resistance toward any who try to correct us.

Conclusion:

- 1) As lengthy as the outline is, it could have been much longer, for the work of the Holy Spirit in both conversion and sanctification is misunderstood on so many different fronts that we could devote several lessons to this.
- 2) My hope is that we will not make the Holy Spirit the forgotten God, but will honor Him and His work as we preach the word of God as all-sufficient in conviction, conversion, and sanctification.

John R. Gibson
Jrg1259@gmail.com

Sources

¹<http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/what-we-believe-about-the-five-points-of-calvinism>

²These quotes were supplied to me by Bill Hall, but no page numbers were cited.

³“The Glory of Christ and the Baptism of the Spirit.” Jeremiah McElyea, Marion Street church of Christ. Athens, AL Oct. 9, 2011. (From my notes on the sermon.)

⁴ <http://www.theopedia.com/Sanctification>

⁵J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs*. Excerpt may be found at this link <https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/packer/Illumination.html>

⁶*Forgotten God, Reversing Our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit*. Francis Chan. (Quotes were taken from the Kindle edition and page numbers were not always noted.)

⁷Beth Moore, from the video *Believing God*.

⁸<http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/what-we-believe-about-the-five-points-of-calvinism#Perseverance>

⁹<http://www.desiringgod.org/sermons/how-the-spirit-sanctifies>

¹⁰The 1960 *Church of the Nazarene Manual*. Taken from an article by O.C. Birdwell. <http://www.truthmagazine.com/archives/volume35/GOT035114.html>

¹¹Jim Davis. <http://www.focusongod.com/Spirit-06.htm>

¹²Because this was a private exchange, I am withholding the name of this young man, but I have included the quote because I think it reflects the thinking of many today.

¹³<http://awordywoman.com/the-worship-we-love-to-hate/>

¹⁴<http://awordywoman.com/gods-answer-to-my-anxiety/>

¹⁵This Facebook discussion began around August 20, 2014 and drew a large number of comments before being removed.

¹⁶Gary Gilley, *Is That You Lord?* Webster, NY Evangelical Press, 2007. Quoted from Gardner Hall, *Conviction vs. Mercy*, Port Murray, NJ, 2013. Gilley, p. 27 / Hall p. 57

¹⁷Hall, p. 57

¹⁸Gilley, p. 42 / Hall, p. 57