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His Person

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The Holy Spirit—Our Helper

Bethany Bible Church, Adult Sunday School Class, February 26, 2012

The Spirit’s Help in Studying The Word

“But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.”¹

We’ve been exploring some of the wonderful ways the Holy Spirit serves as the divine “Helper” of the saints that He indwells. This morning, we take up the subject of the Spirit’s ministry of guiding redeemed people in their study of revealed truth through Scripture--or, as it is sometimes called--His ministry of “illumination”.

Even though the sixty-six books of the Bible give us an utterly sufficient written revelation from God, the Scriptures themselves would still be closed to us--and their revelation to us unfruitful--if it were left up to our human resources alone to understand and apply them. But gratefully, the same God who has providentially given His word to us has also given His Holy Spirit to us in His ministry of “illumination”--that is, “the Holy Spirit’s enabling of Christians generally to understand, to recall to mind, and to apply the Scriptures they have studied.”² As the Westminster Confession of Faith has put it, “The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man’s salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word . . .”³

I. WHY IS THE SPIRIT’S ILLUMINATING MINISTRY NEEDED?

- A. There is a sense in which unregenerate persons can know something of scriptural truth--but only the same way that a blind man might be able to know something of the concepts and terminologies of “color”. The knowledge an unbeliever may have of Scripture through their own resources will not be experiential, life-transforming, or saving. This is because the unregenerate person is spiritually incapable of grasping scriptural truth because such truth is, by nature, spiritual--and therefore only “spiritually discerned”. As Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 2:14; “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” Not only is there a natural inability on the part of fallen man to understand and apply God’s word rightly, but the enemy of our souls also himself labors to keep spiritual truth from unbelievers. As Paul further wrote in 4:3-4; “But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.”
- B. There is, therefore, a fundamental need for a work of God’s grace in someone’s life before they can know the things of God accurately that are revealed to them from the Scriptures. They must be “born-again”, and then be aided by God, before they can know the things which the Scriptures reveal that He has prepared for those who love Him. As Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 2:9-10; “ But as it is written: ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has

prepared for those who love Him.’ But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.” As he affirms in 2 Corinthians 3:14, “. . . the veil is taken away in Christ.”

II. HOW THE SPIRIT FULFILLS THIS MINISTRY TOWARD US.

- A. During His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus “illuminated” spiritual truth to His disciples. In Mark 4:33-34, we read, “And with many such parables He spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it. But without a parable He did not speak to them. And when they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples.” There were times when He even performed this work for them after His resurrection (Luke 24:25-27, 32, 45-48). But even during His earthly ministry to them, He let His disciples know that He would soon be leaving them; and that after He had returned to the Father, it would be the work of the Holy Spirit--whom He would send to minister to them in His place (see John 14:15-18)--to illumine spiritual truth to them. The fleshly powers of even the Lord’s own apostles--who had just spent three-and-a-half years being taught by Him in His bodily presence--would not be enough for them to retain and reliably pass on all the instructions they had received from Him. But the Spirit would come to them and help them to remember all that the Lord had taught them. In John 14:25-16, He told them, “These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” And in John 16:12-15, He told them, “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.” As a result, they would be enabled to accurately communicate to us what Jesus taught them (see John 15:26-27).
- B. Now; that was a promise that the Lord made specifically to the apostles. But the same divine Person who guided the understanding of the apostles now ministers to the saints He indwells by helping them to understanding the spiritual truth that those Spirit-enabled apostles passed on to us. Because all of us who are genuine, regenerated believers in Christ are indwelt by the same Holy Spirit who led them (see Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 2:12; 1 John 3:24); we all have then have the wonderful benefit of this resident Teacher and Guide in the spiritual truth that He has preserved for us in Scripture, Regarding that truth, the apostle John wrote, “Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that He has promised us --eternal life. These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you. But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him. (1 John 2:26-27).

III. HOW WE SHOULD COOPERATE WITH THE SPIRIT IN THIS MINISTRY.

The fact that the Holy Spirit illuminates our understanding of the Scriptures,

however, doesn't mean that we are merely passive spectators. He calls us to have a part in the work of His ministry of illumination:

- A. We must make sure we have entered into a saving relationship with Christ by faith (1 Corinthians 2:14-16; 2 Corinthians 3:16).
- B. We must cultivate an attitude of humble and sincerely dependent prayer upon His ministry (Ephesians 1:15-23; 3:14-21).
- C. We must give faithful attention to the ministries of those He has gifted to serve as preachers and teachers in His church--which would even include their written and recorded ministries in history past (Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11-12; 1 Peter 4:10-11).
- D. We must be faithful and disciplined in personally reading, studying and memorizing Scripture (Colossians 3:16; 2 Timothy 2:15).
- E. We must make it our habit to grow in a lifestyle of personal holiness and obedience to the truth He has already given us and illuminated to us (Hebrews 5:12-14; James 1:21-25).

¹All Scripture readings are taken from *the Holy Bible, New King James Version*; copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

²Robert Raymond, cited in Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1994, 2000), p. 1042.

³*Westminster Confession of Faith, I.VI.*