

PNEUMATOLOGY (42)

The first grammatical point we may observe from our text is that the word “world” contains the article “the.” This means that Jesus Christ had something specific in mind when He said the Spirit will convict “the world.” Greek grammar requires identifying those to whom the article refers, and in order to do that there must always be a careful analysis of the context.

Contextually, Christ had been sharing with His disciples the fact that God’s will for their lives was that they bear “much fruit” (John 15:8, 16). He informed them that as they are doing this, they will discover that they will be “hated” (John 15:18-19), “persecuted” (John 15:20), and excommunicated (John 16:2). Had we been one of these disciples listening to this, our reasoning would have gone something like this—“You have just told us we are to bear fruit and you have also just told us that everywhere we go trying to do this we will be hated and mistreated by the people of this world. How are we to bear this fruit and who will this fruit be since the world hates us?” To this kind of thinking, Christ gives His answer in verses 7-11. The Spirit of God will be your helper. He will convict certain individuals in the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment and thus you will be able to bear fruit, even though the world will hate you and mistreat you. The article “the” refers to those specifically who will be saved, as Dr. Chafer said, it “is restricted to those whom” the Lord our God shall call” (Vol. 6, p. 94). In other words, the Spirit of God convicts all who come to faith in Christ of at least three important realities, thus enabling the disciple to bear fruit:

Reality #1 - The Spirit of God convicts a person of sin. John 16:8a, 9

There are a couple of key observations we need to make regarding a conviction that brings one to salvation and thus is fruit-bearing for the disciple: 1) The word “sin” is singular, not plural (“sin,” not “sins”); 2) The sin is specifically related to unbelief (specifically not believing in Jesus Christ, 16:9).

Prior to Jesus Christ dying on a cross, the sin of “unbelief” in rejecting Him as personal Savior was not possible. In view of this, we may accurately assume from this text that when the Spirit of God convicts a person with the conviction of the Holy Spirit, which will save their lost souls, He does so by convicting the person that Jesus Christ has borne all sin and only by believing on Him will one have everlasting life. The lost unregenerate mind cannot fathom the fact that all sin has been laid on the person of Jesus Christ. Believing this is impossible for one who is unsaved.

However, one who is about to be saved will be one who will experience the convicting work of the Spirit of God in that He will create, in the consciousness of his mind, the personal realization that Jesus Christ died for all sin and that it is **ONLY** by faith in Him that one may have his sins forgiven. Apart from the Spirit’s work of this specific conviction, no one will ever or could ever grasp this point and no one will ever choose, in and of himself, to believe on Jesus Christ. As Dr. Chafer said, an accurate presentation of the Gospel “does not present something for the unsaved to do, it rather presents something for them to believe” (*Ibid.*, p. 96).

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Any person who is truly saved will have been convicted by the Holy Spirit. This conviction will be that Jesus Christ is the only person and only way to being right with a Holy God. This conviction will be such that the person will realize there is nothing he can do about his sin and he will be convicted that his own works cannot ever make him right with God. In this conviction, the Holy Spirit will cause the individual to sense the need to believe on Jesus Christ. A lost person cannot and will not ever come to these conclusions on his own; in fact, he is incapable of understanding this truth. It is only as the Spirit convicts that there will be true salvation by faith in Jesus Christ.

Reality #2 - The Spirit of God convicts a person of righteousness. John 16:8b, 10

Dr. Chafer made a profound point when he wrote: “This passage presents the one and only instance in all of Christ’s teachings when He speaks directly of imputed righteousness—that righteousness which so far from being a product of human effort and attention is the gift of God (cf. Rom. 5:17), in which the believer is now alone accepted of God (Eph. 1:6), and by which alone any person from this earthly sphere will enter heaven” (*Ibid.*, p. 96).

One might ask, since Christ is no longer present on this earth, how could anyone ever come to the conclusion that the righteousness, which God gives that will make a person right with Him, is only found in Jesus Christ? The only biblical answer to this is by the **convicting** work of the Spirit of God. God’s righteousness may only be found by believing on Jesus Christ. Since Christ has already gone back to heaven and is with the Father, and since no one can see Jesus Christ physically anymore, it takes a miraculous convicting work of God’s Spirit to bring a person to realize and believe this.

Again we cite Dr. Chafer: “It is not contended that the unsaved must comprehend the difficult doctrine of imputed righteousness; it is evident, however, that to put his trust in Christ he must abandon all confidence in self as being able to commend himself to God, and count that all that the condemned sinner will ever need before God is providing and awaiting him in Christ Jesus, who is the righteousness of God. Since such a confidence is so foreign to the life, limitations, and experience of the natural man, it is essential that this vital truth be revealed to the unsaved by the Holy Spirit” (*Ibid.*, p. 96).

If one is going to accurately set forth the Gospel in a way that the Spirit can do His convicting work of salvation, one must include in his message the fact that Jesus Christ is the righteousness of God and the only way one can be right with God is by having His righteousness imputed to the individual who has sinned against God.

This critical theme, which is a major theme of the book of Romans, is, in most presentations of the Gospel, totally neglected. But we can be certain that when we do our best to present it, God’s Spirit can powerfully take this accurate, rightly divided presentation and do His convicting work. It is an understanding of this very point that is evidence that the Holy Spirit is truly drawing another lost soul to Christ through His conviction ministry.

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A person who is truly in the process of being saved will have a saving level of understanding granted to him by the Holy Spirit, which will include the fact that the righteousness of God can only be found in Jesus Christ and only by believing on Him may that righteousness be imputed to one's own life.

Reality #3 - The Spirit of God convicts a person of judgment . John 16:8c, 11

All men have been given an intuitive knowledge of the fact that someday they will face a powerful God and Judge (i.e. Rom. 1:20). It is possible to suppress this knowledge, but that knowledge is there. It would seem that all people have some idea of the fact that they will be judged by God. However, it seems the real lack in this conviction, when the issue is salvation, is the basis for judgment. Most unsaved people believe the basis for salvation judgment is not the work of Christ, but their own works.

Prior to Christ's coming into this world, Satan held this world captive . He specifically held Israel as his prisoner by causing her to think that the basis for her righteousness was her own works. We learn from N.T. revelation that Satan still has this type of activity operative in this world (II Cor. 4:3-4; 11:13-15). Satan's lie is to confuse sinners into thinking that the basis for salvation judgment is their own works.

When Jesus Christ went to the cross and died for the sins of the world and then was raised from the dead, He demonstrated to all that not only is He the **ONLY** way to escape the judgment of God, but He, Himself actually took the judgment of God. He visibly and physically demonstrated that He took all sinful judgment upon Himself. He made a triumphant show to all that "in Him" no one will ever face the condemnatory judgment of God (Col. 2:8-15). Satan's hold on man is that he brought sin to this world and this sin condemned all men. However, Christ took the judgment for sin on Himself, so that "whosoever believeth on Him shall not perish but have everlasting life." It is the Holy Spirit who convicts a lost sinner of this wonderful reality and one who is truly saved will have some understanding of it.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer closed his discussion of the convicting work of the Spirit of God with these words: "Thus it is seen that the Holy Spirit reveals to the unsaved whom He calls the very essentials of the gospel of divine grace—the substitutionary death of Christ as that which has been accomplished, along with the all-condemning sin of not believing on the One who thus died, also the perfect standing provided in the same cross, which standing is no less than the righteousness of God imputed. Apart from this enlightenment, the individual unsaved person does not respond though confronted with all the persuasion human sincerity and eloquence may devise. It hardly need be pointed out again that any form of evangelism which ignores this work of the Holy Spirit and which assumes that the unsaved are capable within themselves of receiving the gospel and turning in intelligent, saving faith to Christ—though it may be that through human influence outward actions may be secured—is doomed to superficial results and in great danger of hindering rather than helping those to whom it appeals.

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Christ must be received as the choice of the individual heart and this must be actuated by the innermost conviction of His Saviorhood—an understanding and choice which could never be secured apart from the Spirit's enlightenment respecting sin, righteousness and judgment" (Vol. 6, pp. 98-99).

Any lost person who comes to truth faith in Jesus Christ did so because of the work of the Holy Spirit. The circumstances surrounding the person will be different, the sins of the person may be different, the age and background of the person may be different, but the person who convicted them will be the same Holy Spirit. Is it possible for one to reject a conviction of the Holy Spirit which will bring one to salvation? From a human perspective the answer is yes, but from a biblical and divine perspective, the answer is No! (John 6:44; Rev. 17:8).

Category #2 - The work of the Holy Spirit in the believer .

All doctrines are extremely important or God would not have put them into His Word. However, all doctrines need to be understood in view of the people , time and divine governmental purposes. Although most students of the Bible admit to the doctrine of Pneumatology, most fail to consider this important point and, as a result, the Spirit's work is hindered and misunderstood by ignorance.

In accurately understanding and appreciating the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life, one must realize that this age in which the Holy Spirit works in the individual believer is a very unique age. The Bible is very clear to point out a sharp contrast between law and grace ; between law and spirit (John 1:17; Rom. 8:2; Gal. 5:18). The Bible is also very clear on the fact that Jesus Christ established a new Age of Grace which delivered people from the Law (John 1:17; Gal. 2:16; 3:23-25). Since we have already learned that the agent who convicted individuals of this reality is none other than the Holy Spirit, and since we have seen that Christ promised that after He left this world, the Holy Spirit would not just be "with" the believer, but actually be "in" the believer forever (John 14:16-17), it stands to reason that this age will be one which has a very unique relationship with the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, most who discuss the doctrine of the Holy Spirit totally neglect these truths and the result is a lack of knowledge and power in God's people.

In all, there are seven specific ministries of the Holy Spirit. Two of these we have already examined—the ministry of restraint , and the ministry of conviction . There can be no doubt that every believer has experienced both of these ministries.

Prior to our own salvation, the Holy Spirit carried out these ministries in each of our lives in accordance with the sovereign plan and program of God. After our salvation, the Spirit still carries out these ministries, probably preventing us from falling into sin far more times than we know, and convicting us of sin more times than we would want to admit. However, both the restraining and convicting ministries are experienced, in certain ways, by the unbeliever. However, the remaining five ministries of the Holy Spirit are **ONLY** operative for those who are believers .

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When it comes to understanding the final five ministries of the Holy Spirit, each need to be carefully analyzed and all may be carefully categorized. The first four fall under one category and the fifth falls under another.

The first four works of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life must be understood in the following manner:

- 1) They are pneumatological works involved in all who are saved.
- 2) They are pneumatological works that occur at the moment one is saved.
- 3) They are pneumatological works that will never be repeated in one who is saved.
- 4) They are pneumatological works which happen once to the one who is saved.
- 5) They are pneumatological works which guarantee eternal life for one who is saved.

Every one of the first four works of the Holy Spirit meets this doctrinal criteria. In fact, much confusion concerning the work of the Holy Spirit is due to a neglect of understanding these very important issues. Many heretical belief systems concerning the Holy Spirit exist because these very points are neglected. However, a right belief system demands a right understanding of biblical truth, and, as will be seen, to clearly understand the first four works of the Spirit in a believer's life, these five doctrinal points must be admitted for they are most assuredly true and factual in every instance.

However, as we shall see, the final fifth work of the Holy Spirit is not an automatic feature of salvation. In fact, it is possible for a believer to have legitimately been the recipient of the first four works of the Holy Spirit and **not ever** be a recipient of the final one. The final work of the Holy Spirit is unique in that all Christians experience the first four, but not all will experience the fifth. It is actually possible for a person to experience the fifth work for a period of time and then not experience it again. It must be continually renewed and brought in check in the believer.

The five works of the Holy Spirit, which are connected to the believer, in the order in which we will study them are:

- (Work #1)- The pneumatological ministry of regeneration.
- (Work #2)- The pneumatological ministry of indwelling.
- (Work #3)- The pneumatological ministry of baptism.
- (Work #4)- The pneumatological ministry of sealing.
- (Work #5)- The pneumatological ministry of filling.

Work #1 - The work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration.

It is a shame that the concept of being “born again,” or the concept of receiving the “new birth,” is oft times only viewed as something that is a remedy for human failures and sin, for God, in His infinite Word places a much higher perspective on it than that. He deems it as being a creative work of God in which He actually creates a new life to the extent that the one given life can legitimately be classified as “sons of God.”