

Doctrine of the Trinity, Part 8

We have been working through the various ministries of the Holy Spirit. We now come to a ministry to the saved that we call “illumination.” Through this ministry, we learn spiritual truths. I am not referring to direct divine revelation from God, such as imparting previously unrevealed doctrines to us. That was indeed common in the pre-canon era of the early Church, when the New Testament had not yet been written. God the Holy Spirit revealed to man the *mysterion* or mystery doctrines of the Church Age that had not been previously revealed (1 Corinthians 2:7-8). Men were authors of the new canon, but it was through the divine inspiration of the Spirit of God that these previously unrevealed doctrines were learned and set down in writing.

2 Peter 1:21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

1 Thessalonians 1:5 because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit ...

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Before we had a completed Canon of Scripture, there was a need for direct revelation from God. Now that the Canon is complete (as of about 95 AD), we need *understanding* of what was revealed there, and that is the ministry of “illumination” which we are discussing here.

A personal relationship with God is necessary for illumination to occur. To have a personal relationship with God, there are two prerequisites:

1. The first requirement is that the person must be born again. No relationship with God is possible until the decision to trust Christ is made.
2. The second requirement is to be in “right relationship” with God. By that, I mean being free of unconfessed sin in your life. God cannot fellowship with someone who is in rebellion against Him.

That rebellion must first be eliminated through repentance. The word means a change of mind from a rebellious attitude to one of humility. Once that change of mind has taken place, the next step is to confess any known sins. This is accomplished simply by using the provisions of 1 John 1:9. In the privacy of your own priesthood, approach the Throne of Grace and confess any known sins. First John 1:9 tells us we will be forgiven of our known sins and of any we are unaware we have committed. We are “cleansed” of ALL unrighteousness.

A believer so cleansed is now in right relationship with God again. But a warning! There is a danger we will bounce right back into carnality if we remain self-centered. Confession of sin will get you back on God’s good side, but it will not keep you there. To do that, we need to submit our wills to God’s will.

It is in this right relationship, when we are obedient to God’s will, that the Spirit is able to “illuminate” our understanding of spiritual matters

Romans 8:5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because **they are spiritually discerned**. (Emphasis added)

All members of the human race are dulled in our natural powers of understanding by sin. In addition, Satan veils our minds with false doctrines

2 Corinthians 4:3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴ In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Because divine truth is of a celestial nature, it is comprehended by the dull, veiled human mind only through the work of the Holy Spirit. These truths, foreign to normal human comprehension, require this divine

assistance. The Third Person of the Trinity opens our minds, lifts the veil, and makes that which is foreign to us perspicuous.

John 16:13 “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.”

Christ opens this statement with a pronouncement:

John 16:12 “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.”

Here, Christ speaks of man’s inability to fully comprehend spiritual truths without the Spirit’s aid. At the time this was spoken, the Holy Spirit had not yet universally indwelt believers.

The position the indwelling Holy Spirit occupies in the heart of the believer is the closest of relationships, so that He is able to create impressions in the believer’s mind that seem to have come only from the believer’s own finite mind. All spiritual truths must be imparted by the indwelling Holy Spirit in this way.

1 Corinthians 2:9 But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him” — ¹⁰ these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹ For who knows a person’s thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. ¹² **Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. ¹³ And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.**

¹⁴ The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. (Emphasis added)

This is why the filling of the Holy Spirit is so essential to the intake of Bible doctrine. Outside the will of God (outside your area of operations), you have lost this empowerment of the Spirit. The Spirit is said to be quenched. Our understanding of Biblical truths depends on the illuminating ministry of the Spirit. We may be able to learn them academically and even parrot them back, but it is the Spirit who makes them clear to us and turns them into articles of faith for application to our lives. Knowing, trusting, and using spiritual truths is very different from an academic understanding of the same.

In addition to the Spirit's convincing and illuminating ministry, there are four other closely related ministries. They are baptizing, anointing, sealing, and as an earnest. These four ministries occur at the moment of salvation, when the believer makes a free-will decision to accept Christ as his personal Savior.

Spirit Baptism

There are two words used in the Scriptures that are translated "baptize." Both mean to dip or immerse. One is *baptizo*, and the other is *bapto*. The two have very similar meanings, best illustrated by a 2000 BC recipe for making pickles by a physician named Nicander. Both words appear in the recipe. Nicander says that to make a pickle, the vegetable should first be "dipped" (*bapto*) into boiling water and then "baptized" (*baptizo*) in the vinegar solution. Both verbs describe immersing vegetables in a solution. The first is temporary. The second baptizing of the vegetable produces a permanent change: a cucumber becomes a pickle.

It is this second baptism (*baptizo*) that is in view regarding the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The baptism of the Spirit is more than a temporary "putting in" or immersion of the believer. It involves a physical envelopment that changes the person forever, like a cucumber becoming a pickle. The person is brought under the power and influence of the Spirit, joining him to Christ. *The believer is forever in union with Christ* and is said to be positionally sanctified or set apart unto Christ. The baptism of the Spirit identifies the new believer with the Body of Christ and inducts him into the Church. This is a real baptism, not a ritual baptism that merely pictures this new identity. Furthermore, this baptism produces a permanent change in the believer. The cucumber becomes a pickle and can never change back into a cucumber.

2 Corinthians 1:21 And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, ²² and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

The first part of verse 21, this Spirit Baptism, “establishes us with you in Christ” and refers to the believer’s positional identification with Christ and His Church. The Spirit-baptized believer is anointed, sealed, and “given the guarantee of the Spirit in our hearts.”

Anointing

Indwelling and anointing are synonymous terms in pneumatology and therefore depend on the same body of scriptures for support. As certainly as every believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit and thus becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit, so certainly every believer is anointed by the Holy Spirit.

1 John 2:27 But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him.

All believers are anointed by receiving the Holy Spirit at salvation and are thus made to partake of the divine nature, being born of the Spirit.

Anointing carries both profane and divine connotations. In the secular sense, anointing with oils or fragrant essences served to protect the skin from the sun’s drying effects or to make one smell better. In the divine sense, anointing suggests being “set aside” for a special purpose or consecrated before God. Kings in Israel were anointed, meaning God had chosen them as His representative and endowed them with special powers. This often included the “anointing of the Spirit” or a *temporary* indwelling of the Spirit, called “endowment,” in OT times before the Cross. To be anointed by the Holy Spirit means the person cannot be deposed; he is a sort of Nazirite, and to lay a hand upon him amounts to desecration and sacrilege.

Sealing

The presence of the Holy Spirit in the believer becomes a distinguishing mark, not observable or useful in human affairs, but rather a mark of divine discrimination that God sees. Thus, being indwelt, the believer is sealed and belongs to those who are justified and perfected forever in Christ.

Sealing indicates security. **The one who seals assumes responsibility for the object upon which the seal is imposed.** Believers are, in effect, branded (sealed) and identified as belonging to God.

John 6:27 ...For on him God the Father has set his seal.

Ephesians 1:13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit

Ephesians 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

2 Timothy 2:19 But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his,"

And that is a **permanent condition**.

As an Earnest

All these limitless blessings of the Holy Spirit are an earnest or token, a foretaste of the heavenly glory that will be. An "earnest" is a down payment. It means "alike in kind," but the merest fraction in quantity of the believer's assured experience in Heaven.

2 Corinthians 1:22 and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a **guarantee**. (Emphasis added)

Ephesians 1:13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were **sealed** with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is the **guarantee** of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. (Emphasis added)

"Guarantee" is the Greek *arrhabon*, meaning a pledge, or down payment that the full amount will be paid later. Ephesians 1:14 says that the seal mentioned in verse 13 is a guarantee (earnest) of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it in eternity. As an earnest, the blessings of the Holy Spirit are a down payment of what is to come. The privileges,

opportunities, and spiritual assets associated with the indwelling Holy Spirit are just a small taste of what awaits believers in Heaven.

These four ministries truly set believers apart from the rest of the world and make us God's own possession. Implied is that this is eternal.

John 10:28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

The believer's destiny is sealed and guaranteed. **NO ONE** can snatch us away from our **eternal destiny**.

The Comforter

In the Gospel of John, chapters 14 through 16:15 is what is called the "Upper Room Discourse." Jesus speaks of His pending departure to be with the Father. He speaks of someone who will come and take His place as their "comforter." This comforter will act in much the same capacity as Jesus did for them.

The Greek word translated "comforter" in the KJV, "helper" in the NASB and ESV, "counselor" in the NIV, and "advocate" in the NAB is *parakletos*, transliterated "paraclete." All four translations are accurate, though perhaps not complete. The word means a helper, one called to one's side, aid, succor, and one who pleads another's case. This includes the idea of comforting, but restricting it to comforting is inadequate.

For three and one-half years, Christ had been the disciples' *parakletos*. As He was leaving them, He promised that another *parakletos* would come in His place. In John 14:26, this *parakletos* is identified as the Holy Spirit. Thus, whatever Christ had been to His disciples, the Holy Spirit would continue to be after He was gone. And in every sense, the Spirit of God acts as our comforter in despair, our helper when in need, and our counselor or advocate.

In his *Word Studies*, Dr. M. R. Vincent discusses the title Paraclete. The Hellenistic use of *parakletos* to denote the act of consoling gave rise to the rendering "comforter," which appears in every instance in the Gospel but is rendered "advocate" in 1 John 2:1. In its original sense, comforter

means more than a mere consoler, being derived from the Latin *confortare*, to strengthen. Comforter is therefore one who strengthens the cause and the courage of his client at the bar. The Holy Spirit is, therefore, by the word *parakletos*, represented as our advocate or counsel, “who suggests true reasonings to our minds, and true courses of action for our lives, who convicts our adversary, the world, of wrong, and pleads our case before God our Father.” It should be noted that Jesus, as well as the Holy Spirit, is represented as Paraclete.

God, the Holy Spirit, as “Paraclete,” “Comforter,” or “Advocate,” is so closely identified with our interests that He becomes both our representative and our personal agent, transacting our business for us. He is absolutely and infinitely competent to undertake whatever He can do in our favor, whatever our need or difficulty. This is an incredible blessing to have someone like Him on our side!

In John 16:7, Jesus tells His disciples that it is "expedient" (profitable, better) that He go away, and if He does, He will send the *paraclete*. In John 14:16, Jesus tells His apostles that the comforter will abide with them forever and will not leave them. In John 14:26, Jesus tells them that the comforter will "teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." This is a promise that the Holy Spirit would be their teacher and remind them of the things Jesus had already taught them. The Holy Spirit is the source of edification for the believer.

On the day of Pentecost, AD 30, the single most important event in this dispensation occurred. Read about it in Acts chapter 2, beginning in verse 1. To these frightened and confused apostles, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, came upon them as tongues of fire. It changed their lives forever! They came out of hiding with the courage, power, and knowledge of the Holy Spirit and became the powerful apostles who built the early church.

On the day he received the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the often confused and impetuous Peter, the same Peter who denied Christ three times, delivered one of the most eloquent sermons of his ministry in Acts 2:14-39. I urge you to read it. And while you are reading it, understand that what you are reading are the words of Peter, inspired and energized by the Holy Spirit! Peter would not have been even remotely capable of giving

such a sermon the day before! This Peter in Acts 2:14-39 is the new Peter, the Holy Spirit indwelt, Spirit-filled, and Spirit-enabled Peter!

That is the impact this *parakletos* had on these frightened and confused disciples. The Holy Spirit can change lives. They went from scared to brave. They went from downright stupid to wise and knowledgeable. They went from timid to bold. They went from followers to leaders. If you look at their deeds in Acts and the epistles, you might believe you were seeing the deeds of Christ.

You are! You are seeing Christ formed in them through the Holy Spirit's ministry.

What the Holy Spirit did for the disciples, He can also do for you, and He will if you allow Him. He is our comforter, our helper, our counselor, and our advocate.

Obedience

God expects His children to be obedient to His will, and He has work for you to do. In Galatians 5:16, Paul makes a profound statement. Read it carefully in your own Bible, but I will quote it here from the KJV. "I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." The Catholic NAB says it only slightly differently, but I believe it is even clearer and more forceful. It says, "I say then, live by the Spirit and you will certainly not gratify the lusts of the flesh."

Yes, you have heard this from me before, but it is so profound that it deserves repeating to drill it into your very being.

"Walk" in the KJV and "live" in the NAB both translate the Greek word *peripateo*, meaning to make one's way, to progress, and to make due use of opportunities. It is speaking of a lifestyle, a way of conducting one's life. I prefer the NAB translation "by the Spirit" to the KJV "in the Spirit," but either way it means **this lifestyle is Spirit-produced**. It is enabled by the Spirit and is totally impossible apart from this enablement. You will not live this lifestyle by your own human effort! It takes divine enablement "by the Spirit."

Paul says Israel was "cursed" under the Law and doomed to fail in keeping it (Galatians 3:13). The purpose of the Law was to bring man to an

understanding of sin (Romans 3:20) and to **prove that he could not find righteousness through his own efforts**. Israel's history under the Law was a long succession of failures, sprinkled with only very brief successes. One thing man should have come away with from his experience with the Law was that, no matter how hard he tried, he was condemned to failure. The Law was meant to bring us to recognize our sinfulness and to realize that human effort alone cannot produce victory over sin.

The Law was the *pedagogue* (Greek), translated "disciplinarian" or "schoolmaster," until Christ came (Galatians 2:16; 3:24). It was meant to teach us and provide guidance, but once Christ came and sin was judged, Jesus left us with the Holy Spirit, who enabled spiritual life. Only then is the believer finally equipped to defeat sin in his life!

In Galatians 5:18, Paul tells the Galatians that since they are led by the Spirit, they are not under the Law. The Law is no longer their schoolmaster or disciplinarian (*pedagogue*). They no longer have to rely on fear of discipline and the promise of blessing to meet the impossible conditions of the Mosaic Covenant. They have the enablement of the Spirit. The moral precepts of the Law remain valid, but the Law as a disciplinarian is no longer valid. It has been replaced by the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 5:16 makes a promise to you if you live this lifestyle, that is, "walking in the Spirit." The promise of Galatians 5:16 is that you will not (NAB says "certainly not") fulfill (or gratify) the lusts of the flesh.

"Fulfill" and "gratify" come from the Greek *teleo*, meaning to bring to a close, to finish, to end, to accomplish, to execute. "Lust" is from the Greek *epithumia* and means craving, longing, desire for what is forbidden. What is desired is desired by the "flesh," which is from the Greek *sarx* and refers to the sensuous, fleshly nature of man, what we have been calling man's sin nature or his Adamic nature inherited from Adam.

OK, let's put it together in an expanded translation. It might look something like this. "Live a lifestyle enabled by the Holy Spirit, and you will not sin!" Pretty powerful stuff! Live your life under the control and enablement of the Holy Spirit, using the Spirit's power, and you will have victory over your sin nature's desires.

Understand what this verse says. By the power of the Holy Spirit (walking by the Spirit, or, if you prefer, living in the Spirit), the believer can have victory over sin in his life.

IT DOES **NOT** SAY THE BELIEVER WILL **NEVER** SIN AGAIN.

It says he has a choice now. Live by the Spirit, that is, give control of his life to the Spirit, and **he will not sin while in that yielded state.**

OR... Give control of your life back to your fleshly nature, and you will sin. It is a free-will decision. Black or white. No gray in between. The two states are mutually exclusive. Live by the Spirit and do not sin, or live by your sinful nature and sin. Guess which way God expects you to go.

Oswald Chambers, in his daily devotional “My Utmost for His Highest,” put it this way, “I must realize that my obedience, even in the smallest detail of life, has all of the omnipotent power of the grace of God behind it.”

Works

Not only does God expect His children to be obedient, but He also has things for us to do. He expects us to be productive, not merely church-goers once a week. The Spiritual Life is not for just one day a week; it is for **every** day of the week.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **for good works**, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Emphasis added)

Yes, God has a job for you to do for Him. If you are one of His children through the new birth (regeneration, born again), He has a purpose for your life. God leaves spiritual assets for us to use for His purpose, such as the indwelling Holy Spirit, Spirit enablement, and spiritual gifts, not to mention the training we are to receive through Bible study and the logistical support that comes to us from His bounty. He expects believers to use these spiritual assets, and this is what we will be judged on when we stand before the Bema. Sins will not be mentioned; Christ was already judged for them.

1 Corinthians 3:7 So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. ⁸ He who plants and he

who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. ⁹ For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building. ¹⁰ According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. ¹¹ For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw — ¹³ each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. ¹⁴ If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

In verse 7, Paul describes this production using agricultural terms. Though we may “plant” and “water” (spiritual production), we should remember that it is God working through us who “gives the growth.” Note verse 9, “each will receive his own reward according to his labor.” This means there will be blessings and rewards in heaven for those Christians who are productive. “For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.” (verse 9).

Verses 10 and 11 say we are to build on a solid foundation, Christ, and for those who do, their work will have value, “gold, silver, and precious stones.” Man's work will be tested by fire. Only the gold, silver, and precious stones will not be burned up, and a man with such production will be rewarded (verse 14). The wood, hay, and stubble, all vastly inferior to the gold, silver, and precious stones, will burn. If a man's work is burned, he will suffer loss of rewards and blessings in heaven, “though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire” (verse 15).

1 Peter 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,

Peter speaks of an inheritance reserved for us in heaven. Note that in verse 3 the reference is to the saved, born-again. Verse 4 assures them of

this inheritance. In 1 Peter, we see that divine good, which glorifies Christ, receives an inheritance in heaven.

Your salvation is not at issue at the Bema. Your spiritual production, or lack of it, will be. If there is spiritual production—rewards. If not—loss of rewards. But no loss of salvation (1 Corinthians 3:15).

Second Corinthians 5:6-11 also speaks of this. Understand that the letter is written to believers and addresses their looking forward to being in the presence of the Lord in eternity.

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

Don't get hung up on the two English words "good" and "bad." "Good" is the Greek word *agathos*, which means good of intrinsic value. Its value exceeds the sum of its parts. This is divine good, as opposed to human good. The word translated "bad" is *kakos* and means exactly the opposite of *agathos*, intrinsically worthless. In this context, it does not refer to sins or evil. It refers to worthless human effort, production done for personal glorification.

Agathos produces no glory for man, because man is not its source; God is. "So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth" (1 Corinthians 3:7). Therefore, *agathos* produces glory for God. And it is only *agathos* that is gold, silver, and precious stones that survive the fire test at the Bema.

John chapter 15 speaks of the believer as a branch of a grapevine. The fruit comes from the branches, but it is the vine (roots) that enables them to produce fruit. The vine is Jesus. As in the 1 Corinthians 3 passage we studied above, believers who do not "abide" in Christ (right relationship) do not produce fruit (verse 4). Non-fruit-bearing branches are pruned and removed. This can refer to separation from the power and leading of the Holy Spirit, out of fellowship because of non-production, or, in a worse case, removal from this life under the sin unto death. It does not refer to the loss of salvation. But the branch that abides in Christ produces much fruit (verse 5a). Without this relationship with Christ, no production is

possible (verse 5b). In verse 8, we see that the Father is the one who is glorified in this process.

Why? Because it is *agathos*, the divine good produced by God through the believer. This production must be divinely inspired and energized. We must be divinely enabled by the Spirit to produce this *agathos*.

Lastly, let's return to Galatians and see this production in yet another form.

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Note the source of this "fruit." Does man produce it? The source is God; it is the "fruit of the Spirit." This fruit is produced in the believer by the Spirit and is manifest outwardly to the rest of the world as the Spiritual Life. This is no less than the very lifestyle of Christ, produced in us by God when we are in right relationship with Him.

2 Peter 1:3 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, **so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature**, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. (Emphasis added)

We cannot work for God and ever please Him by our own efforts. That is man-glorifying and is wood, hay, and stubble at the Bema. It burns up! What we must do is allow the Spirit to guide, enable, and energize us. In this process, God works in us and through us for His purposes and His ultimate glory. Such production is divine in origin and is gold, silver, and precious stones.

We have been given spiritual assets, and God expects us to use them for His purposes. Failure to do so will result in the loss of rewards in eternity but not the loss of salvation. But if we are in right relationship with God, "inside our area of operations," and submit our wills to His, we will be productive branches on the vine.