

BIBLICAL TRUTH ABOUT GOD THE FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT

Lesson 28: The Holy Spirit Gives Understanding

Biblical doctrine is the study of what the Bible teaches about God and other important truths. This is the eighth of ten lessons about the Holy Spirit. The Bible teaches that there is only one true God and He exists in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These three persons of the Trinity are equally divine, possess divine attributes, and accomplish divine works. In this lesson we will examine the biblical teaching that the Holy Spirit gives spiritual understanding to the unconverted sinner and to the regenerated believer.

MAIN TRUTH

When the Holy Spirit regenerates sinners, He gives them new minds. All people are naturally born with a darkened understanding, unable to comprehend the things of the Lord. Through the Holy Spirit's transforming power, believers are given the mind of Christ and spiritual understanding. They no longer think in sinful darkness according the ways of the world. Once they are saved, the Holy Spirit continues to transform all believers through the renewal of their minds by showing them the glory of Christ and His will as revealed in His Word.

SOME IMPORTANT TERMS

1. *Revelation*: This refers to the truth that God reveals to man which he otherwise could not know. Human knowledge of God comes by way of revelation. God, and God alone, reveals truth to man. There are two main categories of revelation: general revelation and special revelation. General revelation is given to all people; therefore, it is called "general." It consists of truth that God reveals through the created, natural world, human conscience, and providence. General revelation is helpful, but it is not sufficient to give the knowledge of God necessary for salvation. Special revelation is given only to some people, but not all. It is truth that God reveals through Scripture and His Son Jesus. The revelation of Scripture is sufficient and fully contained in the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments. God is not giving any "new" revelation of divine truth since the completion of Scripture. The content of special revelation is primarily God Himself. God makes Himself known to those who receive His revelation by faith.

2. *Inspiration*: This refers to the process whereby God revealed the truth of Holy Scriptures through the writings of men. Divine inspiration assures us that the entire revelation of Scripture is totally accurate (inerrant) and carries the full weight of God's authority. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. 3:16). The unique significance of the term "inspiration" is not that Scripture is inspiring to read and study (although it is), nor that the biblical writers were inspired to write (although they were), but that the Scripture originated with God and it is the very Word of the living God. When Scripture speaks, God speaks.

3. *Illumination*: This refers to the work of the Holy Spirit to enable man to understand Holy Scripture. The divinely given Word of God must be properly understood and applied. To "illumine" is to shed light on or to give understanding to the reader and student of Scripture.

CENTRAL SCRIPTURE AND OUTLINE

1 Corinthians 2:1-16

1. The Holy Spirit illuminates the mind

Apart from God's revelation and illumination, we would be completely ignorant of Him and die in our sins. But by God's mercy in the application of redemption, the Holy Spirit illuminates the darkened mind of unbelievers so that they can understand the Gospel and grow in true knowledge through God's Word.

A. The natural (lost) man is in spiritual darkness

Without a spiritual mind to understand spiritual truths, every person lives with a darkened understanding. Because of this, everyone is alienated from God (Eph. 4:17). This spiritual ignorance is not the physical inability to comprehend ideas, but the moral corruption of sin. Ephesians 4:17 states that the ignorance of all sinners remains because of their hard hearts. All people should know God, but they suppress the truth in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18-23). Then God gives them over to a debased, natural mind that continues to sin (Rom. 1:28).

Darkness of mind is not just a New Testament reality. In the Old Testament we find this word from the Lord: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hos. 4:6). Israel's rebellion was rooted in its lack of understanding. Isaiah 1:3-4 says, "The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib, but Israel does not know, My people do not understand. Ah, a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity." All through the ages (OT and NT), God reveals that sin's corruption has infected every human mind, so that no one can know God by using reason alone. This is a component of human depravity. Only a supernatural act of God can illuminate the ignorant mind of a sinner.

B. God provides mercy that enlightens the mind and heart

Although man walks in willful darkness, God is rich in mercy. He sent Jesus to atone for the sins of His people, so that all who believe in Jesus will be freed from spiritual ignorance through Him. The Holy Spirit, through the preaching of the Gospel, applies Christ's work of redemption. This application includes the capacity for spiritual understanding given to God's people. Because of the Spirit's work, the natural mind bent on sin is replaced with a spiritual mind that can understand spiritual truths. When a believer comes to know God through Jesus Christ, he abandons the false wisdom of this world and receives the mind of Christ through the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit displays God's wisdom through the instrument of preaching. The world regards the Gospel of Christ as weak and ridiculous. Yet, God has chosen the message of the cross to be the instrument of His saving power (1 Cor. 1:18). What the Father decreed for His glory, and what Christ accomplished on the cross, the Spirit applies through the preaching of the Word.

Redemption planned in eternity → *Redemption accomplished at Calvary* → *Redemption applied*
(Election) (Atonement) (Conversion)

2. Believers are transformed by renewing the mind

Just as the Holy Spirit illuminates the mind to understand the Gospel at conversion, so He continues His renewing work in believers' minds throughout their lives. Christians continue to grow in their knowledge and understanding of God, becoming more like Him in holiness. This is the process of sanctification. In order to walk in cooperation with God in sanctification, it is important to know that the Holy Spirit always uses Scripture in this process. Christ prayed, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth" (John 17:17). As Paul wrote, believers are transformed through the renewing of their minds (Rom. 12:2).

A. The Holy Spirit and the Scriptures

As we learned in Lesson 23, the Holy Spirit is called the "Spirit of truth" (Jn. 15:26). Christ promised to send the Holy Spirit so that He would guide the disciples into all truth (Jn. 16:13). Using the instrument of Scripture, the Holy Spirit transforms believers into the likeness of Christ (2 Cor. 3:18). Just as a person cannot do anything to cause his spiritual rebirth, he cannot cause his spiritual growth. Believers must, however, be diligent in reading and studying Scripture. We open ourselves to error and false teaching if we disregard the connection between the Holy Spirit and God's Word.

B. The believers' responsibility

Every Christian must take seriously his responsibility to know God through the Scriptures. We must rely on the Holy Spirit and the Word of God to guide and edify us, making us more like Christ (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Throughout the Bible, God commands His people to study His Word. Parents are to teach His commandments to their children at all times (Deut. 6:4-8). Joshua was to meditate on the Law day and night (Josh. 1:8). God told the kings of Israel to write a personal copy of God's Word for their own reading and study (Deut. 17:18-20). In the New Testament, God commands believers to put on the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:11), which includes "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" (Eph. 6:17), and the Word of Christ should dwell in them richly (Col. 3:16). The study of Scripture is an essential Christian duty. Psalm 119 describes the priority of Scripture in a believer's life. Every child of God should come to the Bible each day with the prayer from his heart: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" (Ps. 119:18).

MEMORY VERSES

1 Corinthians 2:12 *Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.*

Psalms 119:18 *Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.*

1 Corinthians 2:14 *But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*