

SPIRITUAL LIFE CONFERENCE – FOLLOW UP

In order to answer some questions that have been about the recent conference, we need to recap what we learned during the conference.

I. HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is not a person, but a spirit. The activity of the Holy Spirit and His different designations (Spirit of God, Spirit of the Lord, Spirit of Truth, the Holy Spirit) is connected with the programs of Israel, the nations, and the church.

II. HOLY SPIRIT TODAY

The Holy Spirit's activity is to convict (or expose) a person's unbelief in Christ. This is done by means of the Word of God (Holy Spirit inspired words). The primary work of the Holy Spirit towards believers is to seal us (signifying that we are God's personal possession) and to intercede for us, for we do not know what to pray.

III. SACTIFICATION

The vast majority of Scripture teaches us that we are sanctified. Many of the passages that are used to demonstrate resulting sanctification are actually passages that explain our activity in view of our sanctification. In the few passages that seem to refer to be an admonition to act holy are in conjunction with our position as holy. Our "holy" activity (behavior, conduct) is connected with our behavioral witness. What we do cannot make us holy before God. God's declaration of believers being holies (saints) should motivate us into behavior. You are holy, now act like it.

IV. SPIRITUAL GROWTH

The goal is unity. The means of unity is learning and believing the basic doctrines found in Scripture. Once we all agree to the truth of the basic doctrines, we are mature. Unity goes beyond the basics as well. If there is a disagreement about any doctrine, it needs to be pursued and we all need to come to terms with what Scripture says.

V. SPIRITUAL

The typical understanding is that people fall into one of three categories: natural, carnal, or spiritual. Natural refers to the unregenerate, unsaved unbeliever. Carnal refers to the believer who is not spiritual but an infant in Christ and still living according to the flesh. Spiritual refers to the ideal believer who is living a life controlled by the Holy Spirit.

What we learned during the conference is that a believer is both spiritual and carnal at the same time. We are designated as spiritual when we believe, having been given a spirit or having our spirit regenerated. As believers, we are also carnal and still in the flesh. There is a war occurring within myself between spirit and carnal, Paul explains in Romans 7:14-25. In 1st Corinthians 3:1-4, Paul is not classifying them as a sub-status of believer but admonishing them as having been controlled by the carnal instead of the spirit. You are spiritual; you are carnal; we choose by which we live. The battle is in our thoughts. If we can take our thoughts captive for Jesus Christ, then we are living according to the spirit.

VI. FILLED IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

We do not get filled with the Holy Spirit; He already indwells us. The filling refers to your spirit and filling up your spirit. This is accomplished by means of the Word of God.

VII. WALK BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

My conclusion is that the references to spirit in Galatians 5:16-26 are not about the Holy Spirit but the gifted spirit within each believer. But even if someone takes this as the Holy Spirit being the method of walking, it is not altered.

The Word of God is inspirited text from God through the Holy Spirit given to godly men to write. We have what we need for understanding and encouragement. If we are to follow the Holy Spirit, we have to follow what He wrote through the apostles and prophets. This is not mystical or subjective. We are to follow the gifted spirit within that is fed by what the Holy Spirit wrote. The means and method do not change. We are led by the Word of God that was given to all by means of the Holy Spirit.

The battle is fought in our minds and thoughts (2nd Corinthians 10:3-5). The life of the believer is first thought, then activity.

VIII. QUESTIONS

Ephesians 4:30 – What does it mean to grieve the Holy Spirit of God. Is it by our words and our mental attitude? Doesn't that imply some practical involvement in our lives?

Grieve is “λυπέω *lupeō*” and means to be distressed, sorrow, or to be pained. How do our actions impact the emotions of God?

Are emotions an attribute of God?

1. Genesis 6:6 – God was saddened about man
2. Exodus 20:5 – God is jealous
3. Psalm 7:11 – God is angry

Are these emotions understood in the same manner as our emotions? There are many theories about these and other verses. The predominate conclusion is that words that contain emotion about God are anthropomorphisms. God is spirit, but there are verses that speak of His eyes, His arms, His feet, etc.

Jesus is God in human form. He has the attributes of mankind and displayed emotions. But the Father is not a man, and neither is the Holy Spirit. What does anger portray? Anger would be used to describe the judgment of God, which appears to man as God being angry. God is not driven by emotions; man interprets His actions and assigns emotional attributes.

In Genesis, is God sad in Himself because of man? Or is God sad for the state of man? Grief is one of those attributes that have more difficulty in explaining. The word is “אֲטָסַב *’atsab*.” The word group includes words that mean pain, toil, rebuke, grieve, to be crossed, distort, hurt(ful), or wounds. This word indicates a righteous grief; it is a response to hurtful action by another party.

I cannot find where God is grieved because of negative circumstances. God's grief is based on man's rebellion and, in the Hebrew Scriptures, precedes His judgment, His anger (Isaiah 63:10).

In the Greek Scriptures, Jesus is often grieved but, as previously stated, this is in His humanity. Compare this to the joy that Jesus had throughout the passion of the Christ. As far as grieving God the Father or the Holy Spirit, Ephesians 4:30 is the only reference.

If we do not take emotion as being an anthropomorphism, then we must conclude that there is a non-human emotion understanding where anger, grief, affection, and other emotions are part of God's attributes. But we must be careful not to make God's emotion conform to our sinful emotional experience.

If we take emotional attributes as anthropomorphism, which I do, then from the human experience, human writers describe something about God in order to describe the affect that our behavior has on God. Grieving the Holy Spirit as a believer is then understood not from the perspective of God but from the perspective of man in sinful behavior and rebellion in consideration of the Holy Spirit which lives in us and seals us until the day of redemption.

In either case, grieving is not an action of the Holy Spirit upon the believer but the action of the believer upon the Holy Spirit.

1st Thessalonians 5:19 – *Do not quench not the Spirit* – First, we must define *spirit*. Is this the Holy Spirit or the spirit of the believer? As we observed in other passages, there is evidence for both. There is a definite article, which traditionally indicates the Holy Spirit. However, there is no attributive remarks such as holy, of God, of Christ).

The word *quench* is “σβέννυμι *sbennumi*” and means to extinguish, usually referring to fire or lamps (Matthew 25:8; Ephesians 6:16; Hebrews 11:32-34). Can the Holy Spirit be put out by our actions? Can we put out our spirit?

I am compelled to understand that our sin and rebellion can quench our spirit, but I do not know how we can make the Holy Spirit's light go out or make Him become ineffective or in what way.

This is the only verse where “quenching the spirit” is stated. So, we have to be careful as to how we apply this statement.

In the context of the passage, we have a list of many imperatives (12-22). We see connected thoughts, but they're not necessarily tied to one another. Looking back to when I taught this before, I need to make a correction. I do not believe this is the Holy Spirit. To say that we stifle the work of the Holy Spirit within us means that we need to define what the Holy Spirit's work within us actually is. Biblically, we see this to be positional, not growth or being spiritual.

When we are not thinking spiritually, we rebel against the desire of God and are quenching our spirit.

James 1:5 – This indicates that He will give us wisdom...if we ask knowing His character and ask according to His will. “We need to understand and deal with the fact that God is a giving God and is not scornful. He is ready to give in accordance with His will and character when we ask according to His will and character.” God does respond to prayers that are in accordance with His will.

How does God provide answers to requests? I have no idea. He has given everything we need for life and godliness, but He also has additional graces to be given when He desires as we ask.

Prayer is an opportunity to recognize God as the sovereign God of creation. Our will is not the drive behind prayer. Our responsibility is to align ourselves with the will of God through prayer. James does not say that the Holy Spirit is the means to answered prayers.

Romans 15:13, 19 – the power of the Holy Spirit.

Is this mean the power belongs to the Holy Spirit or that power is concerning Him? There is only one other passage that has “*en dunamis (pneumatos)*.” 1st Thessalonians 1:5.

First, we need to recognize that it is abounding in hope by the ability “of” the Holy Spirit. The means for hope in this context is the power of the Holy Spirit. Is hope a passive result of receiving the Holy Spirit when we believe? The Holy Spirit inspired Word of God is what gives us hope.

In verse 19, Paul is recounting his miraculous works which were manifestations of the Holy Spirit. But this is not descriptive of the church nor prescriptive for them or us. 1st Thessalonians reflects upon this fact as well.

1st Corinthians 2:1-5 – What is the power of God? It is the word of God that was preached to them and written down for us.

2nd Timothy 1:7-8 – This is not the Holy Spirit but the alive spirit given to a believer. The giving of the “spirit of power” is in the aorist tense. This is not a continuous giving of ability through the spirit, but the giving of the spirit which has endowed us with ability.

I cannot find any Scripture where the Holy Spirit is practically functional in ways that are typically understood. At the same time, I do not want to portray a dismissal of the Holy Spirit or of His work. I do not know what He is doing currently.

The point of the Spiritual Life Conference was not to diminish the Holy Spirit. Everything good in my life I credit to God. But if we want to be biblical, we need to teach what the Bible says about spiritual matters and not rely on tradition or our interpretation of personal experiences.

The purpose of the Spiritual Life Conference was to help us understand what we are to do, to demystify the process, and to give us clearly understood and reachable goals. We’re not to set subjective experiential activity as the height of spirituality. If there is a promise, a God set expectation in how we deal with the Holy Spirit, then I would teach it. But what I have found in the objections to this understanding is hypothetical and personal experience.

If there is spiritual mystery, then let God have His mystery. I do not doubt that there is a “work of the Holy Spirit,” but the Bible does not define it, nor does it set any expectation for us to interact with Him.

The best news is that we are not led in ambiguity. We all want to be led by the Holy Spirit and we have His Word.