

Part 8 – November 1, 2009

"The Internal Testimony of the Holy Spirit"

5) *...by their light and power to convince and convert sinners, to comfort and build up believers unto salvation.*

2 Corinthians 4:4-6

1 Peter 1:23 - 2:3

➤ Why do you believe the Bible is true?

6) *But the Spirit of God, bearing witness by and with the Scriptures in the heart of man, is alone able fully to persuade it that they are the very word of God.*

- The problem with relying on the church

A most pernicious error widely prevails that Scripture has only so much weight as is conceded to it by the consent of the church. As if the eternal and inviolable truth of God depended upon the decision of men! ... Yet, if this is so, what will happen to miserable consciences seeking firm assurance of eternal life if all promises of it consist in and depend solely upon the judgment of men? –**John Calvin**, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I, vii, 1

- How then shall we know? The inward testimony of the Spirit

The testimony of the Spirit is more excellent than all reason. For as God alone is a fit witness of himself in his word, the Word will not find acceptance in men's hearts before it is sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit. The same Spirit therefore who has spoken through the mouths of the prophets must penetrate into our hearts to persuade us that they faithfully proclaimed what had been divinely commanded...because until he illumines their minds, they ever waver among many doubts!"
–*Institutes*, I, vii, 4

Let this point therefore stand: that those whom the Holy Spirit has inwardly taught truly rest upon Scripture, and that Scripture indeed is self-authenticated; hence, it is not right to subject it to proof and reasoning. And the certainty it deserves with us, it attains by the testimony of the Spirit. For even if it wins reverence for itself by its own majesty, it seriously affects us only when it is sealed upon our hearts through the.

Therefore illumined by his power, we believe neither by our own nor by anyone else's judgment that Scripture is from God; but above human judgment we affirm with utter certainty (just as if we were gazing upon the majesty of God himself) that it has flowed to us from the very mouth of God by the ministry of men. We seek no proofs, no marks of genuineness upon which our judgment may lean, but we subject our judgment and wit to it as to a thing far beyond any guesswork! This we do, not as persons accustomed to seize upon some unknown thing, which, under closer scrutiny, displeases them, but fully conscious that we hold the unassailable truth! Nor do we do this as those miserable men who habitually bind over their minds to the thralldom of superstition; but we feel that the undoubted power of his divine majesty lives and breathes there. By this power we are drawn and inflamed, knowingly and willingly, to obey him, yet also more vitally and more effectively than by mere human willing or knowing!

—*Institutes*, I, vii, 5)

- The immediate sight of God's reality in the Word

How can we be assured that this has sprung from God unless we have recourse to the decree of the church? — it is as if someone asked: Whence will we learn to distinguish light from darkness, white from black, sweet from bitter? Indeed, *Scripture exhibits fully as clear evidence of its own truth as white and black things do of their color, or sweet and bitter things do of their taste.*

—*Institutes*, I, vii, 2

- J. I. Packer's interpretation of the inward witness of the Spirit:

Calvin affirms Scripture to be self-authenticating through the inner witness of the Holy Spirit. What is this "inner witness"? Not a special quality of experience, nor a new, private revelation, nor an existential "decision", but a work of enlightenment whereby, through the medium of verbal testimony, the blind eyes of the spirit are opened, and divine realities come to be recognized and embraced for what they are. This recognition Calvin says, is as immediate and un-analyzable as the perceiving of a color, or a taste, by physical sense - an event about which no more can be said than that when appropriate stimuli were present it happened, and when it happened we know it had happened.

-J.I. Packer

- Next week (final week): Some Scripture passages on the internal testimony of the Spirit followed by a discussion of Biblical inerrancy

[1 John 5:7-11]