

Pneumatology  
*The Doctrine of the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit*

**THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT BEFORE AND IN SALVATION**

**I. Common Grace**

- A. Definition: God's sovereign acts of grace, kindness and goodness to mankind because they are His creatures. There is no saving benefit in these acts.
- B. The Problem: The Bible presents man, because of the Fall, as totally depraved, who is not able to do one thing that is spiritually good towards God, and if left completely to his natural inclinations, without restraint, would produce a world of utter chaos and corruption. However experience shows us that the unsaved man does many good things, indicating that the unregenerate man has not entirely followed his evil inclinations. There are many unsaved who outshine Bible believing and church-going Christians with their ethics and morality. How do we explain this? It is clear that the natural man can do apparent good, be a splendid pagan, and live a life that seems at times to even be better than the lives of Christians. Answer: The answer is not found in denying the sinfulness of man, but in acknowledging common grace. God works on the life of the unsaved man but not in a saving way.

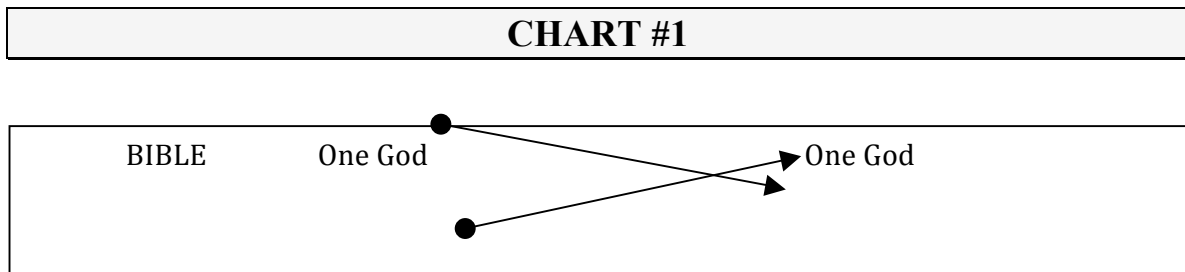
*"Eternally lost, man is outwardly beautiful at times but inwardly rotten to the core. He is like a highly polished, red, juicy-looking, tight-skinned apple that some child might delight in, but when the child takes a bite, his teeth sink into a soft, pulpy, rotten core, crawling with worms, which he immediately spits out or gags on." (Palmer, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 31).*

- C. Aspects of Common Grace
1. General Provision for His Creatures: God causes the sun to rise on the evil as well as the good, and sends rain upon the just and the unjust. He sends fruitful seasons and gives many things which make for the general happiness of mankind. Among some of these common blessings are air to breathe, health, food, clothing, shelter, material prosperity, etc. (Acts 17:22-31; 14:17; Matt. 5:45; Luke 6:35; Psa. 145:9).
  2. Restraining of Sin: God, the Holy Spirit, works on the unsaved so as to restrain them from evil. This in no way renders their deeds pleasing in God's sight but simply makes them less wicked. It means that life in this world is tolerable and livable because men have been prevented by the Holy Spirit from going to excess (Gen. 6:3; 2 Thess. 2:7). The Holy Spirit uses many means to restrain sin such as providence, government, the presence of individual Christians, conviction of conscience, etc. NOTE: The Holy Spirit by restraining sin does not produce salvation but keeps the earth from being hell.
  3. Relative Morality: The Holy Spirit permits and encourages a relative good for His creatures. The very restraint of sin means that there must be something relative good. There can be no vacuum. The unsaved man can produce good works but he cannot produce spiritual works. The natural man can often reach

high levels of morality. That which is truly good can be produced only in the Christian through faith (this is spiritual good), but that which is relative good or apparent good can be produced in the unbeliever.

4. Endowment for Cultural Tasks: The Holy Spirit endows the unbeliever with intellectual capacities, mechanical skills, artistic ability and capabilities in science, languages, music and general culture. The saved have no monopoly on these matters. It is only too evident that those who are non-Christian are often more skilled and accomplished than the Christian. All the great men of history are products of common grace, although many would be skeptical of the fact of a Supreme Being.
  5. God or Religious Consciousness: Religious instinct and fear of God are no doubt related to common grace, though they may not be connected definitely with Scriptures. Every man is God-conscious but only the elect are Christ conscious.
  6. Guiding of Human History: It must be remembered that God is guiding the events of all history and is influencing the lives of Christian and non-Christian alike. God is working all things out for all men according to the counsel of His own will.
  7. General Call to Salvation: This is the proclamation of the gospel and an invitation for men to receive it. NOTE: No one can be saved without first receiving common grace but many who receive common grace are not saved.
  8. Provision of a Savior (1 Tim. 4:10): God has made a provision of a Savior for the world if the world would accept Him.
- D. Natural Revelation and Common Grace
1. Introduction: Natural revelation is certainly related to common grace and this is specifically taught in Romans 1:18-23.
  2. General Observations on Romans 1:18-23
    - a. This portion of Scripture falls in the context of Romans which is showing that all men are sinners (1:18—3:20) and under God's wrath and condemnation. NOTE: This section has nothing to do with hearing or not hearing the gospel; it has to do with the sinful condition of man's heart and his rejection of light.
    - b. This section is dealing with the Gentiles in particular, not the Jews. This would include all Gentiles who have never heard the gospel. NOTE: By application, this passage could deal with the problem of the heathen who have never heard the gospel of Christ.
    - c. This section is not talking about salvation, but condemnation.
    - d. God has apparently given all men some light.
    - e. The light that men have been given is rejected.
    - f. Paul is not arguing the point of what if men sought more light. This is another problem in itself. He concludes this section with the words, "None seek after God" (Rom. 3:11). POINT: The natural man, because he is a sinner by nature, rejects whatever light God gives him. It is his very nature to reject and rebel against God.
  3. The Argument of Romans 1:18-23
    - a. Verse 18: God's wrath comes down upon all men who hold the truth in unrighteousness. NOTE: The context is about the Gentile and it is looking back to primitive man, not savage man. POINT: Way back in the history of Gentiles they all had a concept of the one true God; they were monotheists. But because men are also sinners by nature, they corrupted the light that they did have about God and rejected the true God of Scripture. They held truth about God, but suppressed it and rationalized it because men love darkness rather than light.

- b. Verse 19: These Gentiles had truth about God manifested in them (conscience or mind) which was given by God. NOTE: This does not say that everything that can be known of God was revealed to the heathen, but simply that they had such knowledge of God as rendered their rejection inexcusable. POINT: Apparently there is no one who lives and dies without some revelation from God—a universal revelation which has reached everyone, everywhere, in every age. But whatever knowledge they had they rejected willfully because they were sinners by nature.
- c. Verse 20a: God has made a revelation of Himself in creation to the Gentiles and at one time this was clearly seen. The revelation that men can discover in nature (creation) is limited but accurate. The Gentiles can determine that God is Supreme (Eternal power) and Being (God-hood or divine nature); that is, God is a Supreme Being. NOTE: These simple evidences were rejected by the Gentiles; when one understands this, it is not hard to understand why God should be revealing His wrath against them. **NOTE:** There was enough knowledge to know that God is every man's Creator and enough knowledge to keep the Gentile worshipping God and not falling into idolatry.
- d. Verse 20b: The heathen Gentiles are declared to be without excuse. The thought is that God made a revelation of Himself in nature to the Gentiles that they might be without excuse. The revelation which was rejected, because they were sinners by nature, simply pointed out the real problem that men are sinners and under the wrath of God. NOTE: The heathen Gentile will not be able to plead ignorance for this is willful rejection of truth. NOTE: The revelation of God in creation is sufficient to show a man he is without excuse, but it does not follow that it is sufficient to bring that person to salvation.
- e. Verse 21: When they knew God as Supreme Being, they refused to worship Him and glorify Him; they became unthankful creatures. There was an intellectual rebellion against God and they spurned Him. NOTE: The heathen Gentiles could not stand to have the concept of God in them because it brought great conviction of their sinful condition so they rejected the truth that they had. NOTE: Paganism and idolatry are not steps in human evolution as man advances from slime to divinity. Heathenism is a declension, not an upward reach. The great pagan nations once knew more than they do now. **[See Chart #1]**



- f. Verse 22: Pretending to be wise, these Gentiles became fools because they left the true concept of God and went into idolatry.
- g. Verse 23: They went from monotheism to idolatry, changing the concept of God into the likeness of beasts. Oh, the depravity of the human heart!

NOTE: This section simply shows that men are sinners by nature and do not like to retain God in their thinking.

4. Are the Heathen Lost?
  - a. Definition: Scripturally the heathen are all Gentiles, whether they have heard or not (Gal. 1:16; 2:9; 3:3 cf. 2:2, 8).
  - b. Why Are the Heathen Lost?
    - (1) All heathen have had some light from God (Rom. 1:19-21), but what light they had they rejected and they would rather be damned than serve the Creator.
    - (2) Romans 1:20 says the heathen are without excuse.
    - (3) God solemnly declares that all men, Jew and Gentile, are under sin and condemnation (Rom. 3:23, 3:10-11; 3:19-20). Men cannot plead ignorance, injustice, cultural or environmental differences; they can only plead guilty.
    - (4) If the heathen are not lost because they have not heard, but other men are lost because they have rejected, then we should never go to those who have never heard because, if we do, we will condemn them and rob them of heaven which they already possess apart from Christ.
    - (5) If the heathen are not lost, then there is no need for training missionaries, preachers, teachers, etc.
    - (6) Romans 2:12, a definite reference to the heathen Gentiles, says that the heathen shall perish without the Mosaic Law.
    - (7) It is logical that if all men are sinners and under condemnation, then no man deserves salvation from God. No man deserves heaven but only hell. If a single person is saved from the just penalty of his sin, it is purely and simply because of the undeserved mercy of God. If any man is saved it is because of Sovereign grace.
    - (8) If all men are not lost (that is, God will let the heathen off), then there is no need for the gospel as the only means of salvation (Rom. 1:16-17) and Christ as the only escape from sin and eternal judgment (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). If a person can get to heaven apart from the cross, then the cross has no purpose.
- E. Conclusion on Common Grace

*Some might think that since the Holy Spirit works within them (unregenerate) to enable them to become clever with their hands or to run a business, and because the Spirit has restrained them from sin and has even incited them to do some things that are outwardly rather good, they will be saved. But this is not Biblical. The Bible says nowhere that a person who does good shall be saved. We must recognize that the Holy Spirit works in the unregenerate and unbeliever to do good, and we must be thankful to God for this tremendous, far-reaching influence of His Spirit. But the simple fact is that this influence and working of the Holy Spirit will carry no one to heaven. The sinner needs not only common grace; he needs special grace in order to be saved. He that believes on the only begotten Son shall have eternal life. So, be thankful for the work of the Holy Spirit in common grace, but let not a single person be deceived into thinking that he is saved by it. Rather, let him see that salvation belongs only to those who confess their sins, renounce their old ways, and ask Jesus to redeem them"*

(Palmer, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 39).

## II. The General Call

- A. Definition: A non-saving work of the Holy Spirit whereby, through various means, He makes known the facts of the gospel to an unsaved person, who has no natural capacity to receive it with understanding.
- B. Determining the Meaning of Call From Scripture
1. The "Call" of Identification: This is the common, everyday usage of the word which simply names a person or thing; e.g., "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).
  2. The "Call" of Invitation (General Call): This is the invitation through the gospel which is given to men to accept Christ and His work for sinners. It is the call which comes to all those who are favored with the light of God's special revelation through the proclamation of the divine Word; e.g., "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink" (John 7:37). This call is seldom referred to in Scripture by the word "call" (Greek *kaleo*), which is usually reserved for the specific call to salvation. One exception is Matt. 22:14.
  3. The "Call" of Induction (Specific Call): This call always receives an affirmative answer and the person involved enters into the blessings of salvation. The efficacious character of this call can be seen from a passage such as Romans 8:30. In Scripture, this call is usually related to the first Person of the Godhead, the Father.
- C. The General Call is Related to Common Grace: Actually the general call is simply one phase of common grace; thus these two concepts, while they are not the same, can never be separated.
- D. Other Terms for the General Call: Often the general call is referred to as the outward, external, common call.
- E. The Need for the General Call: The Scriptures present the unsaved as totally depraved and unable to take one step towards God (Rom. 3:9-11; 1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 4:34; Eph. 2:1-3; John 3:3-8). Without divine enablement man cannot even understand the facts of the gospel. Thus there is the need for the Holy Spirit to make known or enlighten the unsaved man to the facts of the gospel. NOTE: The Bible always gives a free offer of the gospel (Isa. 45:22; 55:6-7; Ezek. 3:11; Matt. 11:28; John 6:37; Rom. 10:13).
- F. Major Verses on the General Call
1. Matt. 9:13: Here our Lord speaks of calling sinners to believe in Him as Lord and Savior. This is a general call to the unsaved.
  2. Matt. 22:14: Here our Lord states that many are called (invited to believe in Christ) but only a few are chosen (those who actually respond). Again this is a reference to a general call. POINT: There are certain groups that believe every person in this world is called (invited to Christ) but only some respond. Matt. 22:14 refutes this because only "many," not all are called. Experience also tells us that not every person is called, for there are many who have never heard the name of Jesus Christ.
  3. John 16:8-11
    - a. Background: The Lord Jesus had told His disciples that the world will hate and persecute them because of their Christian faith. In light of the hatred of the world, the natural problem facing the disciples was, "How can we meet the hatred of the world and witness effectively amid such hatred?" The Lord's answer was that He would go away and send the Holy Spirit to them who would help them to witness and enable them to take the offensive.

- b. The Spirit's Work: "When He comes, He will convict the world." (John 16:8). The Holy Spirit was sent for a specific ministry to the world. The word "convict" may also be translated enlighten, or convince ("convince" means to give demonstrable proof). It is a word that really means to rebuke which results in conviction. Thus the word "convict" has to do with the making known the facts of the gospel to the unsaved with a result of some form of conviction. The concept of "world" is a general term and it does not mean that the Holy Spirit has to convict the whole world. The idea is that if any person in the world is convicted it is because the Holy Spirit has brought this conviction in his heart. It is also clear that the Holy Spirit does not have to bring as much conviction to one person as He does the other. POINT: When the Holy Spirit brings conviction, it does not mean that a person will turn to Christ for salvation, but he will be enlightened concerning the gospel and convicted of sin. One can experience the work of the Holy Spirit and still not be saved. POINT: When a person receives the convincing and convicting work of the Holy Spirit two things will happen. He will either give a positive reaction to truth or a negative reaction and spurn the truth. Many reactions will not be positive, but that is because there is conviction by the Holy Spirit and a person is in rebellion to the wooing of the Spirit. Rebellion means the Holy Spirit is at work in the unsaved man. APPLICATION: No Christian, no matter how great his knowledge of Scripture, has the ability to bring conviction to another man's soul or convince him of the person and work of Jesus Christ. If a man is going to be convinced and convicted it will be done by the Holy Spirit. All the Christian can do is tell the gospel and pray.
- c. Results of the Convicting Work of The Spirit
- (1) Convicted of Sin (Manward or Sinward): "In regards to sin because men do not believe in me." Notice that this is "sin" in the singular, not plural; thus it is not referring to sins in general but about sin, which appears to refer to the rejection of Jesus Christ. Rejection of Christ is the root of all sin, and sins are the fruit. The cause of a person's condemnation is sin; the ground or basis of condemnation is unbelief or rejection of Christ (John 8:24; 3:18). If men believed on Christ there would be no consciousness of the sin question because for those in Christ there is no condemnation (Rom. 8:1). POINT;; The Holy Spirit has come to convince (teach the facts about) and convict men about rejecting Christ because men refuse to believe in Christ.
  - (2) Convicted of Righteousness (Godward or Christward): "In regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer." Christ's going to the Father by way of His death on the cross proved that death had no hold on Him (Acts 2:24) and that He was raised up to declare a believer in Christ as righteous (Rom. 4:25). When Christ rose from the dead and ascended to the Father, it proved that all He said was right and shows that he Himself is absolute righteousness. Death, hell and sin had no hold on Christ; only perfect righteousness could rise victorious over these. The world, then, will see the righteousness of Christ and see their own need of personal righteousness, which can only be obtained through faith in Christ (2 Cor. 5:21).
  - (3) Convicted of Judgment (Satanward): "In regards to judgment, because the prince of the world now stands condemned." This is not a judgment yet to come, but a judgment that is past. Satan was judged and defeated at the cross; thus Satan and his cohorts were sentenced to the Lake of Fire (Matt. 25:41). This judgment at the cross was part of the completed work of Christ (Heb. 2:14; Col. 2:15; John 12:31). All those who are not

Christians (ones who do not belong to Christ), the Scriptures say they belong to Satan and the world system that is opposed to Christ. POINT: If God judged Satan, a superior creature, He will surely judge any man who is related to Satan. If Satan is sentenced to the Lake of Fire how much more those who are related to him because of rejection of Jesus Christ (Rev. 20:11-15)?

4. Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:32ff
  - a. Illumination, convincing and enlightenment are all related to the general call.
  - b. In Hebrews 6:4-6 it is indicated that some who have been “illuminated” may “fall away” in such a manner that they may never be brought again to the point of repentance. This context is referring to apostasy from the Christian Faith.
  - c. In Hebrews 10:32ff it is definitely asserted that those to whom the epistle was addressed had been “illuminated” and had also endured severe persecution. Nevertheless, the inspired writer warns them not to draw back “unto destruction” (“shrink back and are destroyed”). He expresses confidence that they are not going to draw back but rather that they are characterized by “faith unto salvation of the soul” (who believe and are saved.) Nevertheless he regarded his warning as necessary.
  - d. Read **APPENDIX 2** – Carnality and Spirituality
- G. The Contents of the General Call (The Holy Spirit uses the gospel in the general call and the gospel call includes four elements):
  1. Information: It is the story of the great acts of redemption by which Jesus Christ has been designated as the Savior for mankind. It is the proclamation of the life, death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ in relation to lost sinners. This aspect of the gospel is referred to in 1 Cor. 15:3-4. The gospel always involves some specific facts and is never truly preached when conveyed in vague and nebulous generalizations.
  2. Interpretation: When facts only have been given, the gospel has not been preached. The gospel is not simply “Christ died,” but that He died for sinners. In Romans 4:25, Paul does not say that Christ died and rose, but that He was “delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification.” In the gospel, as in all the universe, there are no “brute facts” apart from divine interpretation.
  3. Invitation: A sincere offer of Christ and His salvation from sin is preached and anyone who wills is invited to lay hold on these blessings by means of faith; this is the invitation of God through the lips of his ambassadors. “Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses.” (Acts 13:38-39).
  4. Injunction: The gospel must contain not only a sincere invitation and earnest entreaty, but also it must involve a command to accept the provision of God for sinners. The Lord’s message to Israel was, “Repent or perish!” Today, we have the same urgent message and the Apostle Paul when he proclaimed God’s gospel in Athens, “In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent.” (Acts 17:30). “We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal to us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.” (2 Cor. 5:20, Greek).
- H. The General Call and the Word: The Bible affirms constantly the necessity of preaching the Word of God in reaching the lost. The Gospel is God’s power (Rom. 1:16), it must be preached (Rom. 10:14), and faith comes only through the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). Where the Scriptures have not been made known in one form or another, salvation is not found. If men are going to be saved the gospel must be

preached! The Holy Spirit used the gospel as a means of extending the general call to unsaved men and, apart from the gospel, there is no general call.

- I. The General Call and the Need of Prayer: If men cannot comprehend the gospel apart from enlightenment from the Holy Spirit, it is vitally important that the Christian learns dependence upon the Holy Spirit in prayer to bring enlightenment to the lost. The Holy Spirit works through the prayers of the saints.
- J. The General Call and Witnessing: (1) The work of convincing and convicting is not hurried along by stronger appeals, stronger personalities, telling sad stories, longer invitations or keener insight. Often these things merely cloud the issue of Jesus Christ; and (2) The witness for Christ must learn the senselessness of discouragement. If he gets discouraged, it is nothing more than selfishness. Salvation is the Lord's business; the Christian's responsibility is to be faithful.
- K. How Does the Holy Spirit Convince and Convict?
  1. In John 16:7 and 15:26-27, it is indicated that the Holy Spirit does His convicting work through the life of the Christian. Christ was sent to the Father that He might in turn send the Spirit that the Spirit might carry out the task of witnessing for Christ in the Christian (Acts 1:1).
  2. Conclusion: The Holy Spirit may convince and convict through providence, but He may also do it through the word, walk and witness of Christians. The Holy Spirit is in the believer today and it is through this means that He primarily brings conviction. The Holy Spirit is using agents or instruments to convict men and women of their need of Christ.
  3. Examples:
    - (a) The Ethiopian Eunuch: This man was seeking and he had the Word. Was this enough? No. God called Philip to help the man understand what he was reading (Acts 8:29-35).
    - (b) Cornelius: Cornelius was a good, religious, sincere and moral person (Acts 10:1-2) who was unsaved. He needed more light, so the Holy Spirit used Peter to take the message, even though Peter himself did not want to go.
- L. The Christian's Responsibility in Light of the Convicting Work of the Spirit
  1. He Should be a Clean Vessel: The Christian must be constantly checking his personal relationship with the Lord to determine his fellowship with Him. The Christian presents the message and the Holy Spirit convicts and convinces. The believer should be ready at all times to give a witness.
  2. He Should be a Clever Vessel: The Christian should be prepared always to give a clear presentation of the gospel. The knowledge that the Spirit is bringing conviction should make the Christian want to be prepared and to present the gospel accurately.
  3. He Should Pray More: If the convicting work of the Holy Spirit is a necessity for understanding the gospel then this makes the believer dependent upon Him to work. We may pray that God would help them see the message, convict them and open their hearts, if it is His will.
  4. He Should Be Encouraged to Trust the Spirit More: The Christian should not trust in himself or any methods, but trust the Holy Spirit to do it all through him.
  5. He Should be Kept from Discouragement: When the Christian places the emphasis upon results rather than faithfulness, discouragement is always the outcome. Since the Holy Spirit is here to do the job of saving men, this should encourage every Christian.
- M. Theological Problems on the General Call
  1. Question: Can the general call be resisted and spurned? Answer: The general call may be repeatedly resisted and rejected (cf. Acts 7:51). Because of the depravity of the human heart and the rebellion of the fallen human will, men always resist the gospel. The only way to remedy this situation is to change the



inner nature of the listener. The general call may be resisted over an extended period of time and then acceptance of the gospel takes place. Or it may be rejected and never accepted.

2. Question: Does the general call bring salvation? Answer: The general call deals primarily with making the facts of the gospel known to the unsaved and it never brings a person to salvation.
3. Question: Does the general call go to every man who ever lived? Answer: No, because many are called (not all), but few are chosen. The gospel goes out to millions but not to all, because all have not heard the gospel.
4. Question: Why does the general call only go to some unsaved? Answer: We don't know but the gospel will go to as many unsaved as there are Christians who will take the message. If any man hears the gospel it is pure grace!