

The initial work of the Spirit in illumination and regeneration leads to repentance and saving faith (John 1:12–13; 1 Corinthians 2:6–16; 1 John 5:1). By the gift of the Spirit, God assures his children of their sonship and eternal life (Romans 8:14–17); gives to them a foretaste of what is yet to come (Romans 8:23; Ephesians 1:14); restores in them the image of God, conforming them to the likeness of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18; Colossians 3:10); instructs them in the words and ways of Christ (John 14:26); liberates them from the bondage of sin and enables them to obey God from the heart (Galatians 5:16–26); assists them in their prayers (Romans 8:26); mediates Christ’s presence (John 14:16–18); and unites them to one another (1 Corinthians 12:13).

(Sola 5 Confession 6.5)

When it comes to understanding what the Bible teaches about the Holy Spirit, we must begin by recognising that we will never fully grasp all there is to know about him. We cannot fully grasp the character of God, and since he is God, we cannot therefore know all there is to know about the Holy Spirit. This should not, however, stop us from learning what we can about him. Indeed, the fact that we cannot fully know him should lead us to worship him for his infiniteness and grandeur.

Nevertheless, doctrine affects the way we live. When it comes to the Holy Spirit, good theology can lead us to walking in the Spirit, while bad theology may well lead to ineffectiveness or, worse, years of striving after what the Spirit resists. It is of paramount importance, then, that we study what the Bible teaches about the Holy Spirit.

Confession 6.5 details many aspects of what the Holy Spirit does, according to the New Testament. It begins: **The initial work of the Spirit in illumination and regeneration leads to repentance and saving faith.**

John 1:12–13 informs us that Christians are born “of God.” The Holy Spirit is the agent through whom we are born again (see Romans 8:1–11). The theological term for this is **regeneration**. According to John 1:12–13, why is it necessary for the Spirit to regenerate? _____

First Corinthians 2:6–16 informs us that the Spirit plays an active role in revealing divine truth to people. Does this **illumination** precede or follow **regeneration**? _____

The dual aspects of **illumination** and **regeneration** are summarised in 1 John 5:1. It tells us that those who believe (**illumination**) have been born (**regeneration**) by God (through the agency of the Spirit). We respond to the gospel only because the Spirit has first illumined us to our need for the gospel.

Given the above, comment on the specific wording of the Confession, which teaches that **illumination and regeneration LEADS TO repentance and saving faith**. A particular order is emphasised here: first regeneration, then repentance and faith. Why is it important to understand this as the correct order of events in God’s outworking of salvation? _____

The Holy Spirit is therefore God’s **gift** to his people. According to the Confession—and according to the New Testament—this **gift** manifests itself in a number of ways.

According to Romans 8:14–17, God, through his Spirit, **assures his children of their sonship and eternal life**. Why is it important to recognise the role of the Spirit in assuring us of our salvation? _____

The Spirit also **gives to them a foretaste of what is yet to come**. Read (in their fuller context) the proof texts supplied for this affirmation (Romans 8:23; Ephesians 1:14) and answer both **what is yet to come** and what it looks like for the Spirit to give us **a foretaste of what is yet to come**. _____

Paul tells us that the Spirit **restores in them the image of God, conforming them to the likeness of Christ**. In what sense does the Spirit **restore in God’s people the image of God**? Are unbelievers no longer in the image of God? _____

The Spirit also **instructs them in the words and ways of Christ**. Strictly speaking, Jesus spoke the words of John 14:26, cited as support for this affirmation, to the apostles regarding their ability to lay the inspired foundation for the new covenant church. In what sense do we rely on the Spirit to do the same for us? _____

Galatians 5:16–26 is offered as support for the affirmation that the Spirit **liberates them from the bondage of sin and enables them to obey God from the heart**. The text suggests that the Spirit does this for those who “walk in the Spirit.” What does it mean to “walk in the Spirit”? How do we “walk in the Spirit”? _____

In what way does the Spirit (according to Romans 8:26) **assist them in their prayers**? Does this negate the need to be taught how to pray? _____

The Confession tells us that the Spirit **mediates Christ’s presence**. This sounds mysterious. How do you understand it? Consult John 14:16–18 as you formulate your answer. _____

Finally, the Spirit **unites them to one another** (1 Corinthians 12:13). Considering the specific people mentioned in this verse (Jews and Greeks, slaves and free), how should this understanding affect us? _____
