

[IN GOD'S IMAGE 58 - THE HOLY SPIRIT – TRUTH BRINGER]

We have been looking at the various roles of the Holy Spirit.

- ◆ We looked at His role as the “embracer,” the one who goes forth to embrace the lost sheep and draw them into fellowship with the Triune God.
- ◆ Then we looked at another title that describes the work of the Holy Spirit and that is, the Holy Spirit as “builder.”
- ◆ He is building a temple of living stones in which God will dwell.
- ◆ And last time we started looking at his role as our “heart surgeon.”
- ◆ Under the New Covenant, He gives us a new heart motivating us internally to develop the divine nature of God so we become a holy community in which God will dwell.

Living by the Spirit.

- ◆ Last time we introduced the concept of the two contrasting ways of life mentioned by the apostle Paul in Romans 8.
- ◆ ***Romans 8:5 Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.***
- ◆ Living according to the flesh is characterised by selfishness while living according to the Spirit is characterised by selflessness, the same kind of selflessness that inspired Jesus to present Himself as a living sacrifice for the sins of the world.

Today we are going to continue to discuss the role of the Holy Spirit as He instructs us on the subject of “truth.”

- ◆ The Spirit is well qualified for this role as “truth bringer” as Jesus said, ***“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth.” (John 16:13).***
- ◆ Regardless of which culture we live in today, all are built to one degree or another on deception and falsehood.
- ◆ It is not just “fake” news; it is “fake” promises, “fake” attitudes, “fake” agreements, “fake” deals, etc.
- ◆ The Holy Spirit’s role as truth bringer is to develop the culture of the kingdom of God built on “truth.”
- ◆ It helps to have a teacher who is uniquely qualified to dispense truth that comes directly from the Godhead itself.
- ◆ And standing behind the Spirit directing events is the one who claims to be ***“the way and the truth and the life.” (John 14:6).***
- ◆ ***John 16:14 He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you.***
- ◆ We are in very capable hands as the Spirit sets about the task of “conforming” God’s people to the “image of the Son” (Romans 8:29).
- ◆ We have Jesus, the one we are to emulate, directing events, and we have the Spirit giving us the capacity to replicate the selfless example of Jesus Christ as He demonstrated what a life “living by the Spirit” is all about.

So let’s look at the various aspects of the Spirit’s work as He teaches us to become God’s holy people.

◆ **Coming to Spiritual Understanding, or Conversion**

- ◆ We have already mentioned the Spirit’s role as the “embracer,” the one who goes out to embrace the lost sheep and draw them into fellowship with the Triune God.
- ◆ There is a mystery associated with this as the reality is, not everyone is afforded this opportunity to respond to God’s calling in this age, although as mentioned earlier, everyone has been implicated in Jesus’ life, death and resurrection.
- ◆ So as we learned in the case of suffering and evil, we have to recognise God uses aspects of this age as part of His higher purpose of making us in His image.
- ◆ We have to recognise, first, there must be a specific reason why not everyone is “called” at this time, and secondarily, God must have a specific purpose for those who are given this privilege in this age.
- ◆ More of that in a later section. For now we are concerned with the process whereby one is “called” in this age.
- ◆ The key to moving one from living a life “according to the flesh” to one of living a life “according to the Spirit” is the Holy Spirit.
- ◆ ***John 16:8 (NJKV) And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:***
- ◆ The Spirit is going to do something that humanity in its fallen state has a difficult, if not impossible task, of doing and that is, to “fess up” to their deceptive and sinful ways.

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- ◆ Peter echoed this role of the Spirit in his speech on the day of Pentecost – ***“And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh;” (Acts 2:17).***
 - ◆ We talk about the “God-shaped hole” in everyone’s heart that mankind is desperately trying to fill.
 - ◆ Unfortunately, he tries to fill it with all the wrong things (Jeremiah 2:13), power, fame, wealth, drugs, sex, etc.
 - ◆ But we have been carefully designed and created so only one thing can fill this God-shaped hole, and that is a relationship with God Himself.
 - ◆ However, this all changed when the veil opening the way to the Father was rent asunder by Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection.
 - ◆ This opened the way for God to pour out His healing Spirit on mankind and for man through the same Spirit to draw near to God.
 - ◆ The Holy Spirit is sent forth to reveal the risen Christ to those the Father has determined to be part of the church age (John 6:44).
 - ◆ ***2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you as firstfruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. ¹⁴ He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.***
 - ◆ Here is the word, “firstfruits” again, which implies additional fruits sometime in the future.
 - ◆ And notice who is the one doing the choosing? God the Father (John 6:44).
 - ◆ What we are concerned with here is the role the Spirit plays in the conversion process. Salvation is made possible through three steps: 1) ***the sanctifying works of the Spirit;*** 2) ***through belief in the truth;*** and 3) ***through our gospel.***
 - ◆ We will look at these in reverse order as that is the process the Spirit leads us through
- Through our gospel.***
- ◆ Our new life in the Spirit begins with the hearing of the gospel.
 - ◆ ***Romans 10:14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?***
 - ◆ The process begins with someone sharing the gospel message with them.
 - ◆ We have to recognise there are two powers at work here.
 - ◆ First of all, the gospel of Jesus Christ has a power all its own as it is the very word of God.
 - ◆ ***1 Thessalonians 2:13 And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, (the hearing) you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe.***
 - ◆ We shouldn’t feel the need to dress up the gospel as sometimes happens, especially in this age of entertainment, as being the very word of God, it has a power all its own.
 - ◆ It is this power that removes the veil whom ***“the god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” (2 Corinthians 4:4).***
 - ◆ The healing power of the gospel opens the minds of unbelievers and gives them the spiritual insight they need to understand the spiritual gift of grace being offered to them.
 - ◆ ***2 Corinthians 4:6 For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ.***
 - ◆ The second power at work is the Holy Spirit “convicting” us ***“of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”***
 - ◆ ***1 Thessalonians 1:4-6 For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, ⁵ because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction.***
 - ◆ Now in addition to God choosing us, and hearing the powerful words of the gospel, the Holy Spirit moves to convict us of our need for a Savior.
 - ◆ These two powers, the gospel and the Spirit working together bring us to the second point, ***“belief in the truth.”***
- Belief in the truth.***
- ◆ This is a believer’s response to hearing the “truth.”
 - ◆ The Spirit does two things.

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- ◆ First, it lifts the obscuring veil of ignorance that hides the truth, and illuminates the mind to the good news of the saving grace of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:14-16).
- ◆ It strips away the false image we have of God and reveals Him as the God of love He truly is (John 3:16-17).
- ◆ The second thing the Spirit does with the lifting of this veil is a little more personal and disturbing.
- ◆ For the first time we see ourselves for who we truly are, exposing us as selfish, sinful creatures who have rebelled against their Creator and Father and gone off to live a life dictated by the desires of **“the flesh.”**
- ◆ We see this miracle of conviction taking place on the day of Pentecost when Peter stood up and addressed the crowd in Jerusalem.
- ◆ ***Acts 2:37-38 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”³⁸ Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.***
- ◆ The Holy Spirit initiates both of these steps. First, revealing a loving God to us, and second, exposing our true sinful nature.
- ◆ Both are extremely important if we are to have a healthy perspective of our calling and our future relationship with our God.
- ◆ A failure to recognise God’s true nature will lead to a distorted view of Him similar to what Jesus experienced with the Pharisees and the Sadducees who viewed Him through the legalistic prism of the law, while a failure to recognise our true sinful nature leads to “cheap grace” and the resulting licentiousness Paul experienced with the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 4:14-21).
- ◆ Living by the Spirit means allowing the Spirit to reveal the Father’s true nature to us, and to allow Him to disciple us so that we do become God’s holy people.
- ◆ It is at this point we move to the third aspect of the Holy Spirit’s work in the conversion process.

The sanctifying work of the Spirit.

- ◆ The crowd at Jerusalem had heard (1) Peter preach the gospel, (2) the Holy Spirit convicted them and following Peter’s instruction to, ***“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit,”*** the Holy Spirit took up permanence resident in their lives and began His sanctifying work.
- ◆ This not to say the Spirit has not been at work in a person’s life prior to His taking up permanent residence in a new believer’s life.
- ◆ The “embracer” has been active through the whole process, slowly awakening spiritual understanding in the person’s life.

Now, before we move into this third aspect of the sanctifying work of the Spirit, we should say a few words about the various ways the Holy Spirit moves to bring someone to conversion.

- ◆ One of the more interesting questions you can ask a believer is how they came to Christ?
- ◆ It truly is amazing to hear of all the various ways one is brought to salvation.
- ◆ It seems each of us, like Saul (Paul), the Ethiopian eunuch, Cornelius and the Gentiles who came to Peter after his dream of the sheet full of unclean animals, have our own personal story as to how we were brought to salvation (Act 9:1-19; Acts 8:26-38; Acts 10).
- ◆ Sometimes as in these examples, it was through dramatic means such as the case with Paul when he was struck down on the road to Damascus, and sometimes it was the quiet voice of Philip as he explained salvation to the eunuch from the book of Isaiah.
- ◆ The circumstances surrounding conversion has nothing to do with its authenticity.
- ◆ Conversion is all about coming to that point of expressing faith in Jesus Christ and accepting the gift of salvation offered to us.
- ◆ I mention this as in some circles today the external circumstances surrounding one’s conversion have overshadowed the miracle of conversion that has taken place internally in a person’s life.
- ◆ While external circumstances surrounding conversion may have played a more important role in the establishment of the early church in order to attract believers, it never was and never will be a requirement for genuine conversion.

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- ◆ Following generations of believers would mostly come from within the church community as they adopted the faith of their parents.
- ◆ To imply someone (especially second generation Christians) have not received the Spirit because their conversion was not accompanied by some sort of dramatic experience is to miss the point of conversion.
- ◆ Whether it is by dramatic means or by a quiet voice, the point is if we follow Peter's instructions to the crowd on the day of Pentecost, all those who put their faith in Jesus Christ will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit in full measure.
- ◆ It is not our place to second-guess how the Spirit chooses to move in a person's life.

Next time we will continue with this third aspect of the conversion process, the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.