

[IN GOD'S IMAGE 59 - THE HOLY SPIRIT – LIFE BRINGER]

We have been looking at the role of the Holy Spirit as our teacher.

- ◆ Today we are going to continue to discuss the role of the Spirit as “teacher” as He instructs us on what it means to become God’s “holy people” as we live a life “according to the Spirit.”
- ◆ Last time we looked at the role the Spirit plays in the conversion process based on the account in 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14.
- ◆ ***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.***
- ◆ 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 looked at the first two steps of these three steps 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?***
- ◆ So the process began with someone sharing the gospel message with them.
- ◆ **Belief in the truth.**
- ◆ This is a believer’s response to hearing the “truth.”
- ◆ The Spirit does two things.
- ◆ First, 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 is it exposes us as the selfish sinful creatures that have rebelled against their Creator 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.***
- ◆ It is at this point we move to the third aspect of the Holy Spirit 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 permanent residence in their lives and began His sanctifying work.

There are two aspects to the sanctifying work of the Spirit

- ◆ The first aspect has to do with our calling, that special privilege of being called in this age and being set apart for God’s holy purposes.
- ◆ In the same way items in the tabernacle or temple of old were sanctified or set apart for God’s holy purpose, so now as part of the New Covenant, the living stones that will make up this new temple in which God will dwell are set apart for His holy purpose.
- ◆ The ceremony of the “laying on of hands” at baptism is to signify this special status of being set apart as one of God’s holy people (Acts 8:14-18).
- ◆ Unfortunately, the full spiritual impact of what occurs at this point of our coming to faith in Jesus Christ seems to be less appreciated here on earth than it does in heaven.
- ◆ Jesus in Luke 15 devotes a whole chapter to the heavenly ramifications of a sinner coming to repentance.
- ◆ He begins with the parable of the lost sheep, which ends with this statement.
- ◆ ***Luke 15:6-7 Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’⁷ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.***

[IN GOD'S IMAGE 59 - THE HOLY SPIRIT – LIFE BRINGER]

- ◆ Then he tells the story of the lost coin and ends with this statement.
- ◆ **Luke 15:9-10** *And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.'*²⁰ *In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."*
- ◆ It's party time in heaven when a sinner repents.
- ◆ The reason they are celebrating is because of the spiritual ramifications of the event.
- ◆ Jesus goes on in Luke 15 to spell out the reason for the heavenly celebrations with the parable of the prodigal son.
- ◆ Again we see the process the son has been led through in order to bring him home to His loving Father.
- ◆ At this point in his journey he is a little more circumspect about life after having experienced a life separated from His Father and living a life according to the "flesh."
- ◆ The key statement being, **"When he came to his senses" (Luke 15:17).**
- ◆ But helping to bring him to this point was the "embracer" sent out on behalf of the "good shepherd" to bring home the lost sheep.
- ◆ But like many today, with their harsh assessment of what God is really like, he totally misjudged what His Father's reaction would be to his homecoming.
- ◆ Although humanly speaking, he would be considered lucky to be treated as a lowly servant after his blatant contempt for His Father; instead we see the true nature of the Father revealed in the way He responds to the son's return.
- ◆ **Luke 15:20-21** *So he got up and went to his father. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.*
- ◆ Not exactly a response one would expect from a human father after being treated the way he was.
- ◆ This is the divine response about which Jesus spoke when He said, **"for God so loved the world" (John 3:16).**
- ◆ As mentioned earlier, this parable of the prodigal son is really the larger story of a rebellious mankind who thumbed their noses at their Creator.

But notice a couple of events, both initiated by the father, had allowed Him to respond to His wayward son this way.

- ◆ First, Jesus as we have learned through His life, death, and resurrection has cleared the way for the parties to be reconciled.
- ◆ He had paid the death penalty for the son's disobedience, and He had responded faithfully to the Father on behalf of the son.
- ◆ Of course Jesus opened up the path of reconciliation while we, and the son, were ignorant and still in our sins (Romans 5:8).
- ◆ Second, and again the Holy Spirit is instrumental in the process as He had convicted the son **"of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:" (John 16:8).**
- ◆ Notice the change of attitude that had come over the son when we contrast his words now with what he had originally said to his father.
- ◆ **Luke 15:21** *The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'*
- ◆ A recognition of one's sin as a personal affront to God and an acknowledgement of God's mercy provided by Jesus' sacrifice is essential to genuine reconciliation.

I mentioned we, here on earth, don't seem to appreciate the full impact of what spiritually transpires when a sinner comes to saving faith.

- ◆ Well here on earth we might underestimate the significance of what has just happened, but in Luke 15 we witness the response in heaven.
- ◆ **Luke 15:22-24** *"But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'* *So they began to celebrate.*
- ◆ Notice a little sidebar here. The father was so excited about the event, He brushed aside the son's carefully prepared speech and moved straight on to the celebrations.

[IN GOD'S IMAGE 59 - THE HOLY SPIRIT – LIFE BRINGER]

- ◆ Like the rest of the salvation process, Jesus Christ has already accomplished each step in the process on our behalf.
- ◆ He lived for us, He died for us, He rose for us, and it is no different with saving faith. He even provided us with His gift of saving faith already expressed to the father on our behalf.
- ◆ That is why the father brushes aside the son's carefully prepared speech and moves straight on to the son's new reality.
- ◆ This new reality is the reason why there is such a celebration in the heavenly realm.
- ◆ A new son of God has been born into God's spiritual family.
- ◆ The birth of this new son is the culmination of the combined work of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit over many millennia to fulfil their purpose of "making man in their image."
- ◆ That's why there is such a celebration in heaven over "one sinner who repents."
- ◆ The items given to the son, the robe, the ring and the sandals, signify the son has been restored to sonship once again by His father.
- ◆ But notice he is a totally different son to the one that demanded his inheritance. This son had experienced both a death and a new birth on his way to reinstatement, ***"For this son of mine was dead and is alive again."***

Again it is the Holy Spirit that has brought about this radical transformation.

- ◆ It is the Spirit that has gone out, embraced and drawn the son back to His Father, and it is the Spirit that has provided him with "new life."
- ◆ ***John 3:5-6 Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. ⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.***
- ◆ We mentioned before how the Holy Spirit is associated with new beginnings. Well it is no different at this pivotal point in one's salvation story.
- ◆ It is the Spirit who gives us "new life" so that we are now incorporated into the very life of the Trinity, as adopted sons.
- ◆ ***Romans 8:15-17 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba Father."***
- ◆ But notice to what Paul says here about "fear."
- ◆ Under the law, the Israelites constantly worried as to if they were good enough. Unfortunately, many church people today suffer this same fear.
- ◆ But now under the benefits of grace provided by Jesus Christ, acceptance is no longer dependent on our "works" but on Christ's "works."
- ◆ This effectively reinstates that wonderful sentiment of "assurance" we forfeited at the Garden of Eden when we sinned.
- ◆ We are God's beloved children no matter what (Romans 8:31-39).
- ◆ But notice something else about this gracious God of ours. Not only is all forgiven and the son restored to full sonship, but with his restored status as a son, this renegade who had previously squandered his inheritance, is now considered what? An heir once again.
- ◆ ***V.16-17 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.***
- ◆ We humans are slow learners, but in the end we get there, not because of any great effort on our part, but because we serve a gracious and loving God who has poured out one spiritual blessing on top of another so that we arrive where we belong.

I mentioned at the beginning there are two parts to the "sanctifying work of the Spirit."

- ◆ This first aspect has to do with our calling, that special privilege of being called in this age and being set apart for God's holy purposes.
- ◆ Next time we will move on to the second aspect, that of "sanctification."