

Life Through *the* Holy Spirit



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *John 3:3-6, 15-17; Rom. 8:6-11; Gal. 5:16-25; Eph. 1:6, 7; Col. 2:6.*

Memory Text: “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are the spirit, and they are life” (*John 6:63*).

The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail. The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power. It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer. It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 671.

What incredible thoughts! What a powerful and precise revelation of the importance of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. Yet, we must always remember: In the same way that Jesus never forced Himself upon anyone, neither will the Spirit. We must make a daily choice to cooperate; otherwise, He can do little for us.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, June 3.*

Salvation and the Spirit

As we've already seen, the Holy Spirit guides us into truth; that means, of course, He guides us to Jesus, for as He Himself said, "I am . . . the truth" (*John 14:6*). Yet, the truth about Jesus isn't just that He is God, which He is, or that He entered into humanity, which He did, or that He lived sinlessly, which is true; instead, the crucial truth about Jesus is that He died as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. No matter how important everything else about Jesus is, in the end, they all culminate in His substitutionary death in behalf of humanity. Any theology that ignores or weakens this point is deviating from the work of the Holy Spirit, who is to guide us into "all truth" (*John 16:13*), and Christ on the cross as our Substitute is the center of all truth (*1 Cor. 2:2*).

Look up the following texts and write what they tell us about the foundation of our salvation:

John 3:15-17

Rom. 3:22-24

Eph. 1:6, 7

As Christians, the foundation of our hope, our acceptance with God, stems not from anything we can do, not from any works of righteousness we can produce, not even from any fruit of the Spirit but only from the righteousness of Jesus credited to us by faith. This is our surety, our guarantee, the only sure foundation upon which we can have any assurance. Through the merits of Christ's perfect life, granted to us through nothing but God's grace—which is His unmerited favor toward us as wayward sinners—there is no condemnation for us (*Rom. 8:1*), either now or in the judgment. Of all the truth the Holy Spirit could bring us, what could be more precious than this?

Are you struggling with assurance of salvation? Pray over today's study. Make the Bible promises your own. Ask the Spirit to help you learn to trust only in Christ's merits as the basis of your salvation.

Key Text: *Romans 8:6-11*

Teachers Aims:

1. To emphasize the availability of salvation as a gift of God's grace and love.
2. To explore the practical aspects of a living salvation.

Lesson Outline:

I. God's Love Motivated Jesus' Sacrifice (*John 3:15-17*)

- A. Salvation is freely given to ALL who will accept it.
- B. Jesus' sacrifice is the only means of salvation and only through the Holy Spirit are we able to accept it.

II. The Holy Spirit Is at Work Preparing our Hearts for Salvation (*Rom. 7:6, 24-8:4; Col. 3:12-16*)

- A. Efforts made without the Spirit are "dead works" of no value to us.
- B. Effects of the Holy Spirit in our lives are the fruit of the Spirit and a natural result of living in Him and Him in us.

Summary: For us to truly live as Christians we must be filled with the Holy Spirit in a daily intimate relationship. The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives will be as evident as a neon sign in the darkest night. Sometimes we become frustrated because we feel we must do something to help God accomplish His work. The truth is that we do have to do something but that something is surrender. Staying surrendered to the will of God is often the hardest part of our lives. Yet, if we daily focus on our relationship with God we will find that there is actually a joy in surrendering to Him.

COMMENTARY

Introduction

The Holy Spirit is the primary Agent in producing the new birth and forwarding the work of renewal and sanctification in our hearts.

I. Salvation and the Spirit

"The promised Holy Spirit, that He [Christ] would send after He

Death to Self: The Spirit in Us

No question, the Holy Spirit will guide us into the truth about Jesus. But His work for us doesn't stop there; on the contrary, it only begins there. Leading us to Jesus, pointing us to the way of salvation, is only the first step in the Spirit's work. For not only does the Holy Spirit work for us, guiding us to Jesus; He also works in us, changing us, taking the salvation we have in Jesus and making it manifest in our lives. The Christ who died for us is now the Christ who lives in us, as well.

Of course, the only way Christ can live in men and women is through His Spirit. Jesus infiltrates our minds by the Holy Spirit. The operations of God, in and for humanity, are through His Spirit. Without it, we might know intellectually about Jesus' death, but it would never save us, for it would never become the life-changing force that it must be for all Christians.

Read Romans 8:6-11. In your own words, write out what these verses are saying to you. How do they help you understand what the Spirit does in the lives of all followers of Christ?

Notice the importance Paul placed on the work of the Holy Spirit in us. Though the great preacher of salvation by faith alone, Paul is just as emphatic about the place of holy living and obedience. There is no ambivalence here: If we live after the flesh, we will die; if we don't have the Spirit working in us, we are not Christ's. It's hard to imagine how much plainer he could have been.

According to Paul, we should be dead to the flesh; in other words, our carnal desires, though there, should not dominate us. The same powerful Spirit that raised up Jesus from death is now working in us, making us dead to sin and alive unto righteousness. Paul isn't talking just theory here: This is the reality of salvation in the life of the believer.

What is your own experience with being “dead” in Christ? Does this “death” occur only once, or is it a daily, ongoing process? What does your answer tell you about the day-by-day struggle Christians must face?

ascended to His Father, is constantly at work to draw the attention to the great official sacrifice upon the cross of Calvary, and to unfold to the world the love of God to man, and to open to the convicted soul the precious things in the Scriptures, and to open to darkened minds the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness, the truths that make their hearts burn within them with the awakened intelligence of the truths of eternity.”—Ellen G. White, *Reflecting Christ*, p. 132. Consider Acts 2 and the centrality of the Cross in Peter’s Spirit-inspired sermon at Pentecost. (See also *Gal. 3:1-4, 5:1-7, 24-26.*)

II. Death to Self: the Spirit in Us

Prayerfully ponder *Romans 8:1-14* in conjunction with *Colossians 3:1-11*. Consider what it means to “mortify the deeds of the body . . . through the Spirit” (*Rom. 8:13*) and come alive to Christ and His righteousness (see *Rom. 6:3-13*). We need more than doctrinal explanation here, but Spirit-blessed application of the truth as it is in Jesus.

“Candidly and seriously we are to consider the question, Have we humbled ourselves before God, that the Holy Spirit may work through us with transforming power? As children of God, it is our privilege to be worked by His Spirit. When self is crucified, the Holy Spirit takes the brokenhearted ones, and makes them vessels unto honor. They are in His hands as clay in the hands of the potter. Jesus Christ will make such men and women superior in mental, physical, and moral power. The graces of the Spirit will give solidity to the character. They will exert an influence for good because Christ is abiding in the soul.”—Ellen G. White, *Ye Shall Receive Power*, p. 51.

III. The Spirit and the Life

When Jesus told the multitudes that the words He spoke to them were Spirit and life, and that “ ‘he who feeds on Me will live because of Me’ ” (*John 6:57, last part*), most of His listeners turned away in disgust. This was not because they thought that Christ was prescribing a literal or mystic form of cannibalism, but because they rejected the invitation to come under His life-transforming authority. (See *John 6:51-66, 1 John 5:9-12.*)

“Unless this converting power shall go through our churches, unless the revival of the Spirit of God shall come, all their profession will never make the members of the church Christians. There are sinners in Zion who need to repent of sins that have been cherished as precious treasures. Until these sins are seen, and thrust from the soul, until every faulty, unlovely trait of character is transformed by the Spirit’s influence, God cannot manifest Himself in power. There is more hope for the open sinner than for the professedly righteous who are not pure, holy, and undefiled. . . .

“Who is prepared to allow Jesus to enter the soul and cleanse it from everything that tarnishes or corrupts? The standard is ‘Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect’ (*Matt. 5:48*). God calls upon men and women to empty their hearts

The Spirit and Life

Yesterday, we saw how firmly Paul linked the Spirit with life, in contrast to the flesh and death. It's a theme found elsewhere in his writings. Obviously, it's something the apostle considered of major importance. We who were once dead in sin (*Eph. 2:1*) are now, through the Spirit, dead to sin and alive unto God (*Rom. 6:11*). What a radical change!

Read Galatians 5:16-25. Notice the contrast he expresses here between “works” (*vs. 19*) of the flesh and the “fruit” (*vs. 22*) of the Spirit. If you could summarize these texts in a single sentence, what would you write?

Here, too, Paul is very plain: If you do the things of the flesh, you will die, you will be lost. It's that simple: The Spirit brings life, the flesh brings death.

Interesting, too, is how he contrasts “works” of the flesh with the “fruit” of the Spirit. Perhaps Paul was contrasting how we reap from the flesh what we sow from the flesh. In other words, sin is what we work at, suffer with, and finally reap the results of. In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is something that naturally happens in a person who is under the control of the Spirit.

How are we to understand these two phrases (“you are not under the law” [*vs. 18*] and “against such there is no law” [*vs. 23*]) in the above texts?

Paul, for sure, is not saying Christians should no longer follow the Ten Commandments. That would contradict so much not only of what he wrote in other places but of what other parts of the New Testament teach, as well. Instead, he seems to be saying that if you manifest the fruit of the Spirit, you are automatically obeying the law and thus are not being condemned by it. The fruit of the Spirit is an expression of the law just as the works of the flesh are violations of it. The Galatians were Jews who were falling back into legalism; Paul was seeking to lead them toward something higher than dead works, which could not save them. Far from negating the law, he was urging them to live in the Spirit, which is expressed in obedience to the law.

of self. Then His Spirit can find unobstructed entrance. Stop trying to do the work yourself. Ask God to work in and through you until the words of the apostle become yours, ‘I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.’”—Ellen G. White, *Ye Shall Receive Power*, p. 51.

IV. Born of the Spirit

The new birth is not a compound of human and divine efforts, but it is a miracle carried out solely by the power of God operating deep within us and completely irradiating our lives. (See *John 1:12, 13; Eph. 5:8-14.*) Our part is to receive Christ without conditions or stipulations of our own. Take Him completely; He will make you complete. (See *Acts 8:36-38, 26:13-20.*) The Holy Spirit works on our hearts to present Christ as a living, personal reality, whom we receive as our Savior and Sovereign. Subtle, penetrating, persuasive, and infinitely powerful is the Spirit’s work to bring forth the new birth.

Inductive Bible Study

Texts for Discovery: *John 1:1; Romans 6:22, 23; 8:1-3, 12-15; Galatians 3:5*

- 1 Christ is present to us in the form of the Holy Spirit. This means that the Spirit makes available to us knowledge of Jesus Christ and His salvation. How would you describe the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of someone who already has accepted salvation?
- 2 The Holy Spirit makes Christ present to seekers and believers. Yet, we also know that the Spirit is a distinct, personal entity in His own right. What do these two facts about the Holy Spirit teach us about the relationship between the members of the Trinity?
- 3 The Holy Spirit gives us new life and sustains that new life. Why is it necessary that we have new life? In what sense is our life in the Spirit new, or distinct, from our old life? In what sense were we “dead” prior to our conversion? In what sense are we alive after our conversion?
- 4 The Holy Spirit expresses Himself in our lives in what is essentially obedience to divine law. How might such obedience differ from the outwardly flawless obedience to the law one may see in those who adopt a legalistic approach to Christianity, or in those who adhere to legalistic religions?
- 5 What is the role of the human will in the work of the Spirit? Can the Holy Spirit compel us to do anything? If not, how does He make it less difficult for us to make the right choices? Is it still difficult for us to be good? Why?

“Born of the Spirit”

Read John 3:3-6. What does Jesus mean by making the distinction between being born in the flesh and being born in the Spirit?

We are all, by nature, born in the flesh. Unless “born again” (which, in the Greek, really means “born from above”) by and through the Holy Spirit, we remain in the flesh and will, of course, die in the flesh.

Our only hope is the new birth, a regeneration and a partaking of the divine nature. The divine nature is imparted or mediated by the Spirit through the Word. Regeneration is, therefore, not our natural life brought up to the highest level of attainment but rather divine life from above imparted to us “who were dead in trespasses and sins” (*Eph. 2:1*). This comes through the power of the Holy Spirit working in us (*see Titus 3:5*).

The new birth, though, isn’t the end of the experience of salvation. It’s the beginning. No matter how life-changing the new birth is, we must daily live out that experience. We’re not just born again and then go happily and obliviously into the kingdom of God. It just doesn’t work that way.

Read Colossians 2:6. What do these words say regarding what it means to live out our new-birth experience?

The life of someone born from above includes self-denial (*Luke 9:23*), self-sacrifice (*Rom. 12:1*), and a surrender of our sinful desires (*Rom. 6:19*). Though in and of ourselves we are not capable of these things, the Holy Spirit working in us will bring us to the point where we have to make the choice to yield to Him as opposed to the flesh. Once that decision is made, He will give us the power to obey. In the end, everything depends upon the right action of the will. We have to make the choices.

The next time you face temptation, consciously dwell upon your free choice at the moment of temptation. Realize that the decision to obey God or to sin is yours. Will you yield to sin, or will you surrender to the Holy Spirit, claim His power, and get the victory?

V. Connection

Salvation in Christ introduces us to intimate fellowship with the entire Godhead through the Spirit. No part of the Deity remains aloof from us or inaccessible. This communion is most directly open to us through the avenue of receptivity to the Word of God (*see John 14:15-17, 21-23; 15:7-15*). God's Word begets new life in the soul, a life that conforms to the image of Christ, the Living Word, thus making us part-takers of the divine nature. (*See 1 Pet. 1:2-5, 9-14; 2 Pet. 1:1-4*)

“God's holy, educating Spirit is in His word. A light, a new and precious light, shines forth from every page. Truth is there revealed, and words and sentences are made bright and appropriate for the occa-

Witnessing

Born-again Christian. What *exactly* does the term mean? Obviously, it means different things to different people; however, all would probably agree that its overall meaning connotes a complete change in character and focus. Someone who is born again is incapable of living the same lifestyle that he or she lived before conversion. This person is filled with the good news. Haven't we all met people who have truly experienced a life-altering spiritual change? Wouldn't we agree that they are changed people? We are all still sinners, to be sure; however, such people are now no longer hopeless but are people of hope!

What has brought about this miraculous change? Coming face-to-face with the plan of salvation, accepting Jesus Christ as our personal Savior, beginning a daily walk with Him. The Christian learns how deeply Christ loves and yearns for His children, so much so that He has sent a part of Him, His own Representative, the Holy Spirit, to guide and lead us on the salvation journey. What joy it is to be aware that the Holy Spirit is not physically limited to one zip code, one point in time, one Christian's troubles. Rather, He has unlimited access to all at any time, any place, under any circumstance. Truly, He is the great Comforter!

The new Christian learns quickly that example will lead others to Christ *or* that example will turn others away from Christ. The importance of setting the right example is willingly undertaken, because there is a great need to share the joy and liberation that comes with accepting Christ—His life, teachings, death, and most importantly, His resurrection and intercession for humankind.

A true believer is absolutely *unable* to hoard the good news. The *urgency*, the *need* to share with others, is first and foremost in his or her heart. This individual has received a precious gift that has been opened and, like the sweet scent of a priceless perfume, draws others to its Source.

Are you drawn to this Source? Have you opened the gift? Will you share it with others, whenever and wherever you can?

Connection

Before Jesus died, He gave His followers the promise of the Holy Spirit. Notice, however, what He said specifically in John 14:18: “I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.”

The Bible is clear—Jesus is now ministering for us in the heavenly sanctuary (*Heb. 9:24*). What, then, did He mean when He said “I will come to you”?

Jesus is no longer here in the flesh, but He is here in the Spirit, which is His Representative on earth now. Through intimacy with the Spirit, we have intimacy with Christ. The Holy Spirit keeps the presence of Christ alive for us. Through the Spirit we can have a close and intimate walk with Christ.

And this walk is, in many ways, the crucial issue of life through the Holy Spirit. We want to serve God because we love God; we want to be cleansed of sin because we love God and we know what sin has wrought in God’s creation. Sure, life through the Spirit demands surrender, sacrifice, and death to self; but if the Spirit dwells in us, it will keep before us the amazing sacrifice of Jesus in our behalf. If we, day by day, under the unction of the Holy Spirit, dwell upon Jesus and upon the wonderful love manifested toward us through His death on the cross, we will be empowered from above to live as God asks us to live. To be sanctified isn’t just to stop doing bad things; it is to be “set apart” for God, to live for Him in faith, repentance, and surrender. This can happen only through a living connection with Him. “We may leave off many bad habits, and yet not be truly sanctified, because we do not have a connection with God. We must unite with Christ.” —Ellen G. White, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Jan. 24, 1893.

In your own religious experience, what are the things that allow you to connect with Jesus? Write just what it is that connects you to Him and helps you know and love Him better. At the same time, write alongside your answer whatever Bible verses you find that correspond with your answers. Be prepared to share your response in class.

sion, as the voice of God speaking to the soul.

“[Through] the Holy Spirit . . . the promises spoken by the great Teacher will captivate the senses and animate the soul with spiritual power that is divine. There will grow in the fruitful mind a familiarity with divine things that will be as a barricade against temptation.

“The words of truth will grow in importance, and assume a breadth and fullness of meaning of which we have never dreamed. The beauty and riches of the word have a transforming influence on mind and character.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 132.

This is not a religion of imaginary ideals, but of divine fellowship that is elevating, instructive, and fully satisfying. (*See 2 Cor. 13:14.*)

Life-Application Approach

Icebreaker: From your childhood, share a conflict you may have had with a sibling or parent and how it was reconciled. Why did these struggles diminish as you became older? As you read Galatians 5:16-25, make two lists. One should include “the acts of the sinful nature” (*vs. 19, NIV*) and the other, “the fruit of the Spirit” (*vs. 22, NIV*). Ask God to change your life so it will look like the second list as you “keep in step with the Spirit” (*vs. 25, NIV*).

Thought Questions:

1 Discuss what it means to be *alive*. Why did you include more than breathing and having a pulse? Read John 3:3-6, 15-17. How do these passages broaden the definition of what it means to be truly alive? How does a worldview, that includes eternal life, widen and deepen our perspective? How would you describe the ways that your great-controversy perspective benefits your life to someone who hasn’t heard of it before?

2 When is it a good thing to be controlled? And, even more difficult to imagine, when might it be a benefit to be dead? Read Romans 8:6-11. How do Paul’s stark contrasts compel our understanding? Make a mental list of how allowing Christ to live in you through the Holy Spirit has changed your experience and attitudes. How would you introduce a friend or coworker to a new life in the Spirit?

Application Question:

The other day, Samantha had trouble with her computer. It wouldn’t boot, because the power cable was loose. What kinds of things (for example, busyness, apathy) loosen our connection to the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit provides the power for us to claim and live out our salvation. As a class, share personal experiences about practical ways to remain linked to God. Spend a few moments in prayer, asking God to strengthen each one’s commitment to Him. Also, petition that He remove any barriers that interfere with our relationship with Him.

Further Study: Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 226–231; *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 373, 374; *Selected Messages*, book 2, pp. 38, 39; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 171–176, 209, 210, 388.

“The gift of righteousness is communicated to men through the agency of the Holy Spirit (see John 16:8). Herein lies the difference between the ineffective righteousness man seeks through works and the effective righteousness that comes through faith. In the former the Spirit has no part, for the effort is purely human and thus independent of divine grace.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 977.

“Every time a soul is converted, and learns to love God and keep His commandments, the promise of God is fulfilled, ‘A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.’ Ezek. 36:26. The change in human hearts, the transformation of human characters, is a miracle that reveals an ever-living Saviour, working to rescue souls. A consistent life in Christ is a great miracle. In the preaching of the word of God, the sign that should be manifest now and always is the presence of the Holy Spirit, to make the word a regenerating power to those that hear.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 407.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ As a class, go over your answers to Thursday’s final question. What points do the answers have in common? What can you learn from one another? If you could summarize in a few lines, what’s the key to truly being connected with Christ?
- ❷ What advice would you give to someone who says to you “I love Jesus, and I want to obey, but I keep falling into the same sin over and over”?
- ❸ As we discuss the work of the Holy Spirit in us, why is it always crucial to remember that the basis of our salvation is what Christ has done for us? What dangers do we face if we ever lose sight of that crucial truth?