



Redemption Applied: The Spirit in the Church (cont.)

We have seen the Spirit with Israel, the Spirit on Christ, and now we're going to be looking at the Spirit and the Church. We've just seen the real inauguration of that in Acts 2. In your notes there—and we're just going to look at this real quick, and then begin to dive in. My goal is to get through the Spirit and the Church during this hour, and then, for our last hour, be able to dive into those significant issues from blasphemy to baptism, from tongues to healing and prophecy.

What's happening in Acts 2 is the Holy Spirit is inaugurating a shift here, a major shift—as you've got in your notes there—from a few of God's people to all of God's people. Acts 2:4 states: "*All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit.*" This Spirit—this transitory presence of the Spirit in the Old Testament—not only was His presence transitory, not only was He transitory in that way, but He was just on a few select people.

Now, instead, when you get to Acts 2:4, it says all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit. Then, the three thousand people come to life, come to salvation. "*Repent and be baptized, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*" Three thousand people were receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit there, right when they're saved. From a few of God's people to all of God's people. From limited power to unlimited power. You have ordinary Galileans speaking in extraordinary language capacities. You have Peter preaching the first Christian sermon starting in Acts 2:14. This is the guy who, not long before, was denying that he even knew Christ, and now he's boldly proclaiming Christ. What's the difference? The difference is the Spirit on him. From limited power to unlimited power, and from one nation to all nations, the Word being spoken in the power of the Spirit in all these languages, accessible to every nation under heaven. What happens in response when the Lord awakened the people through His Spirit? Here's what happens.

One, the Church stands in awe. If you want a cool church-growth method, try Acts 2:1-4. That will work. That will get people coming. Things like that start happening, the church is in awe, and the world stands amazed.

Before we dive into the rest of this picture of the Spirit in the Church, I want to pause and say one thing here. Acts 2 is a unique event in redemptive history. It is not intended to be repeated. We do not need the Holy Spirit to come down to us in that way because the Spirit dwells in us. Just like the three thousand were saved, we receive the gift of the Spirit when we trust in Christ. The Spirit's work is what we're about to look at. So, we don't in any way need a repeat of Acts 2. At the same time, in the history of the church, there have been times—periods—when God, in His sovereign grace, has chosen to pour out manifestations of His Spirit in unusual ways among His people, for example the 1806 Haystack Prayer Meeting.

Some college students who had been praying together got stranded outside one night with a storm coming. They huddled under a haystack, and it became known as the Haystack

Prayer Meeting. They began to talk about how the Spirit was awakening their desire for foreign missions, which was really unheard of in much of their thinking in 1806. They began to pray together and seek the Spirit of God. In the months that followed, one third to one half of the student bodies at Yale, Dartmouth, Amherst and Princeton came to Christ. Mighty awakenings across these college campuses began to happen and students started going out to other nations on missions.

One hundred years later—1904-1906—Evan Roberts started the Welsh Revival. He preached a sermon to 17 people on the need for the Church, for the people of God, to be honest before God. The Spirit of God awakened people's hearts in an amazing way—in an indescribable, extraordinary way. In the days to come, basically, over the next few months—let me get this right, within three months—one hundred thousand people were saved in one of the churches in Wales. Alcoholism dropped by fifty percent. The crime rates dropped so low that policemen formed singing choirs to go around to different churches because they didn't have enough work to do.

In the history of the Church, God has moved in mighty ways, and I can't help but think 1806, 1906, 2009, pray that God will do it again in our day, that God would do it here. I want to see this kind of movement of the Spirit of God among the faithful of God. Let's be a people who pray like we want that. Fast like we want that. Live like we want that. Not a repeat of Acts 2. We don't need that. We've got the Spirit in us, but what we want is to see an awakening of the Spirit in Birmingham and in the United States in a way that propels us into missions.

Here's what we're going to do. What you've got in your notes are twelve different ways that the Spirit works in the Church. Not that this is completely exhaustive, but this really sums up twelve different ways. We're going to run through them and see, because this is where it comes to life. All that we've heard tonight builds up to this point. This is how it applies to us. This is what the Spirit does in our lives. Not in Israel, not on Christ, but in the Church, in us; the Spirit in us.

Now, what I'll do with each one of these twelve functions of the Spirit is I'll give a definition for what it means. It'll be that way for each one of these.

The Spirit regenerates...

The Spirit regenerates. What does it mean for the Spirit to regenerate? What we mean when we say the Holy Spirit regenerates is the Holy Spirit alone is able to bring new life to God's people. The Holy Spirit alone is able to bring new life to God's people. This is the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus in John 3:5-8. Look at the verses there.

Jesus answered, 'I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, "You must be born again." The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.'

"Born again from above" is the language there. Born of the Spirit. Now, we've got to be careful. We must not confuse regeneration—what it means to be born again. What I mean by that is, for example, Barna Research talks about how half of people in America today are "born-again Christians." Then, they go on to talk about how all these "born-again Christians" are living just like everybody else in the world. Well, the reason that is so is because half the people in America are not born-again Christians.

What does it really mean to be born again? It's far deeper than intellectual ascent to Jesus while sitting in a pew or a seat on a Sunday. You may say, "Well, I believe in Jesus." Every intoxicated person I meet on the street believes in Jesus. Couples sleeping together all over Birmingham believe in Jesus. Families who have not had any desire to worship for 20 years say they believe in Jesus. Now, the question is have you been born again?

We must not complicate regeneration. We don't need to complicate it, but we can't confuse it either. We must be clear on what happens in regeneration. What happens when someone is born again? Let me just pause here, real quickly, and say there is no more important question in this room. Every single one of our eternities in this room is dependent on understanding the answer to this question: what happens when someone is born again? Have you been born again?

What does the Spirit do in regeneration? John 3 tells us that first, the Spirit opens our eyes. Some other Scriptures, like Acts 16, where the Lord is opening Lydia's heart, also demonstrate this. What you've got in John 3 is Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council, a Pharisee who spent his life obeying the law. He is devout, respected, and he's radically devoted to the Word, but he has no spiritual life in him whatsoever. He needs to see his need to be born again.

That's what Jesus is starting here. He is saying that new birth is necessary to know God. He says, "You must be born again." The only way you can know God is to be born again—it's not an option. You must be born again. No person in this room will spend eternity in heaven unless we are born again. It is necessary to know God, and the new birth is impossible without God. Born again—who can do that? Who chooses to be born? Who in this room decided one day, "I'd like to be born and come into the earth?" You don't do that. It's impossible without God.

Why? Well, look at what Scripture says—we're going to fly through these—this is why we can't give ourselves life: we are morally evil. Genesis 8:21 says, "*...Every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood.*" We are spiritually sick. Jesus came for the sick, not the healthy. We are slaves to sin. John 8:34 tells us that everyone who sins is a slave to sin. You and I are slaves to sin. We are blinded to truth. The god of this age, Satan, has blinded our minds. We can't see the light of the gospel. We can't even see it. We are dark in our understanding. "*Our hearts are hard,*" Ephesians 4:18 says. We are "*children of wrath*" and "*lovers of darkness*" Ephesians 5:6-8 says. Romans 5:10 says that we were "*God's enemies.*" Ephesians 2:3 says we were "*by nature, objects of wrath,*" "*children of wrath*" and we were "*spiritually dead.*" Ephesians 2:1 states, "*As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins.*"

Look at that list we just discussed. How can those who are morally evil—every inclination of their heart is evil from childhood—how can they choose good? How can those who are sick make themselves well? How can those who are slaves set themselves free? How can the blind give themselves sight? How can lovers of darkness come into the light when they hate the light? That is what John 3 talks about later. How can an object of wrath appease the One who pours out that wrath? How can the dead come to life? This is the idea: the new birth is impossible without God. No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again and that must happen from above, from the Spirit.

This leads to the new birth is dependent on the Spirit. It is similar to the description found in Ezekiel 37. We are dead bones and we need life. We need the Spirit to open our eyes to our need for Him. That's what's going on there in John 3.

Second, not only does He open our eyes, but in regeneration the Holy Spirit changes our hearts. He changes our hearts. I want you to listen with me to this stunningly beautiful passage of Scripture in Titus 3:3-7:

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by [by whom?] the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

What a picture! What a transformation that happens here. This is what the Spirit does when we are born again. He changes our hearts. This is not us coming to Christ with us thinking, "Well, I guess I need to pray this prayer and ask God to forgive my sins, so that I can save my skin. I don't really want to, but I want to get out of the line going to hell and get into the line going to heaven, so this is what I've got to do. I'm going to let go of the things of the world that I really love, and I'm going to give myself to what I'm really not that excited about." That's not what salvation is! Salvation is a change of heart. It's not where we, begrudgingly, let go of the things of the world, so we can hang onto Christ. It's where we see the Spirit of God open our eyes to see this stuff does not compare to the treasure we have in Christ, and we cling to Christ because we want Him.

This is something the Holy Spirit is doing in us. It's what Ezekiel talks about. When you see "born of water" in John 3— "*must be born of water and the Spirit*" —what is that talking about? Look at the Old Testament background in Ezekiel 36:24-27:

For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

What happens? He changes our hearts. He cleanses us. He makes us clean. That's what the Spirit does. He cleanses us by the work of Christ on the cross through His Word. We are washed in the Word.

He cleanses us, and second, He indwells us. He puts His Spirit in us. He opens our eyes, and He changes our hearts, so that we are cleansed of sin. He dwells in us, and now, we want the things of God. We want Christ, and the Spirit does it all. This is what the Spirit does in regeneration. He opens our eyes and changes our hearts.

Third, the Spirit enables our belief. This is what Jesus begins to talk about, especially, in John 3:11-17. "*God so loved the world...*" You know the verse. "*...those who believe in Him will never perish but have eternal life.*" The whole picture here is the Spirit drawing us to Him. "*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up in the last day*" (John 6:44). There are other places in Scripture that teach this as well.

He enables us to turn from sin. The Spirit enables us to turn from sin; to turn from the darkness that we live in; to turn from sin and to trust in Christ. Turn and trust—that's the picture in Acts 2. Repent and be baptized. Repent—be baptized. Repent. Turn to God, so your sins may be wiped out. Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household. All throughout the book of Acts, what you see is turn and trust, turn and trust. The Spirit in regeneration enables us to turn from sin and trust in Christ.

He opens our eyes and changes our hearts. He enables our faith, and the Spirit transforms our lives. He transforms us for our eternal good. For our good and for the Father's eternal glory. In John 3:21, Jesus says it will be clear that what has been done in your life has been done through God. This is the quintessential text, really, of a picture of what's coming of regeneration from the Old Testament. Listen to what He says in Ezekiel 36:22-23,

'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: "It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am going to do these things..." [This is right before He talks about putting His Spirit in them.] "...but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone. I will show the holiness of my great name...Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Sovereign LORD, when I show myself holy through you before their eyes."

God is making a great name for Himself in turning us from sin and enabling us to trust in Christ for our good and for His glory.

The All-Important Question...

It all begs the question, the all-important question: Have you been born again? I would ask this of every person in this room tonight. There is no more important question than this. Have you been born again by the Spirit? I'm not asking if you sit in a pew, or you attend the activities, or if you have an intellectual ascent. Has the Spirit of God opened your eyes to see the depth of your sinfulness and your need for Him? Has he changed your heart? Not if you have found a list of things that somebody has told you to do in order to earn salvation. "Say these words." "Pray this way." Has your heart been changed by the Spirit of God? Has He cleansed your heart from sin? Has He put His Spirit in you and begun the process of transformation? I'm not saying that everything is transformed and perfect in our lives—we're going to talk about that in a minute—but has He begun this process of transformation as you turn to Him, as you turn from sin and trust in Christ?

If you have never been born again, if there is doubt about whether you have been born again, I would implore you, I would urge you, I would invite you—even now—to bow in your heart and say, "I need to be born again." If you know you haven't been born again, and you want to be born again, ask the Spirit to do that in you. Even the desire to do that is evidence of the Spirit's work in you. I would encourage you to not let that one question be casually treated in your life. It's an all-important question. Have you been born again by the Spirit?

The Less-Important Question...

Now on to a less important question: were Old Testament believers regenerated by the Holy Spirit? Old Testament saints, were they regenerated? Now, this is where you've got some different opinions—different theological opinions—even in the context of evangelical Christianity. There is no word for regeneration in the Old Testament. You've got pictures like you see in Ezekiel 36, but there is no word for regeneration in the Old Testament.

Here's how I would understand the answer to that question. First, our commonality with Old Testament believers. I think we, along with Old Testament believers, are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone and from the Spirit alone. Okay? That's commonality. Now, where do things differ some?

Our differences with the Old Testament believers. We're saved by grace alone. There's really no difference there, we're all saved by grace, period, there's no difference there. Through faith alone. Now, this is where things get a little bit different. It's both through faith, but listen to Romans 4:20-22. It's talking about Abraham, and his faith being credited as righteousness. *"...He did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why 'it was credited to him as righteousness'"*—because he believed God. This is why it says right after this that the words *"credited to him"* were not written for him alone but also for us. It ties this to us. We're both saved through faith, but in the Old Testament, it's a faith looking forward to Christ—in anticipation, looking forward to Christ. For us, the difference is that it's faith looking backward.

I want to be very careful about this. I hesitate to put it this way because I don't want to give the idea that we live our Christian lives today looking in the rear view mirror. We look back 2,000 years ago to the gospel story of Jesus on the cross. That's what we look back to, but the reality is we live by faith in the Son of God today. *"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."* (Galatians 2:20) That's the picture. It's present. It's our confidence and present grace, and it's present faith but we're looking backward to what the Old Testament believers were looking forward to.

So, grace alone through faith alone—their faith is looking forward, our faith is looking backward in that way—in Christ alone. Yes, Christ. Hebrews 11:26 tells us that by faith Moses, *"...regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward."* In the Old Testament it's an anticipated Messiah, not a full understanding of everything that was coming. It's an anticipated Messiah. In the New Testament, our faith is in an ascended Messiah. It's a different perspective here.

Looking back or forward, anticipating the Messiah, we look to an ascended Messiah. Then, from the Spirit alone. Both. *"I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws."* (Ezekiel 36:27) In the Old Testament, you do have an experience in the Spirit—it's incomplete. We talked about that. In the New Testament, there's an indwelling experience of the Spirit. An indwelling experience. I think the Scripture is clear that the Old Testament believers did not have the same kind of experience with the Spirit that you and I have. It's a new covenant experience with the Spirit that we enjoy.

It doesn't mean that the Spirit was not at work. I think the picture we have in the Scriptures is of the Spirit opening eyes, changing hearts and transforming lives in the Old Testament—by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. This is what the Spirit was doing. So, there is, in that sense, regeneration going on, but it's not on the same level when it comes to the experience of the Spirit or the perspective on Christ that we have today. We're looking backward to an ascended Messiah, and we have a complete indwelling of the Spirit. They were looking forward to an anticipated Messiah and had an incomplete experience of the Spirit.

So, those would be the differences. No question, Old Testament believers—they were just that, believers. They were saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone through

the Spirit alone, but there were some differences in how that looked. That's how I would answer that question. Moving on. The Spirit regenerates.

The Spirit indwells...

The Spirit indwells. This follows right on the heels of this. The Holy Spirit unites our lives with Christ through His presence with us. The Spirit dwells in us. This is Romans 6:5-8: *"If we have been united with him [Jesus] like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with...if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him."*

We die with Christ. We live with Christ. We know that, since Christ was raised from the dead, He cannot die again. The death He died He died to sin, once for all; and the life He lives, He lives to God. In the same way, we're dead to sin but alive to God because we're united with Christ. This is what John Calvin is talking about here. He says,

We must examine this question. How do we receive these benefits which the Father bestowed on his only-begotten Son—not for Christ's own private use, but that he might enrich poor and needy men? First, we must understand that as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that He has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and is of no value for us...All that he possesses is nothing to us until we grow into one body with him...{And} the Holy Spirit is the bond by which Christ effectually unites us to himself.

Through the Spirit, our body becomes His home. You, yourselves, are God's temple. God's Spirit lives in you. Our body becomes His home. His resources become our riches. He dwells in us. He dwells in us and he gives us all that He has. I never really understood Luke 11:11-13 until I was studying it—I guess it was last summer when we were walking through a series in Luke.

"Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

Now, in Matthew's version—Matthew 6—it says how much more will your Father in heaven give whatever to those who ask Him? It doesn't mention, specifically, the Holy Spirit. Now, I've wondered why? What if I wasn't asking for the Holy Spirit when I was praying? What if I was praying for this situation in my life or that situation in my life, or this going on or this need in my life? Why does He say He'll give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him? I used to think, "That's nice, but that's not all I pray for." Then, to realize when it comes to the Holy Spirit—what He is giving us, Who He is giving us.

We go to Him when we're asking for comfort in a certain situation. He says He's not going to give you comfort, but He's going to give you the Comforter. We ask for help; He doesn't give us help, He gives us the Helper. We ask for guidance; He doesn't give us a map or instructions, He gives us the Guide. When we ask for wisdom, He gives us the Spirit of Wisdom. When we ask for truth, He gives us the truth Teacher. We ask for love or joy or peace or patience or kindness or goodness or faithfulness—He gives us the One who bears all of that fruit in us. This is the beautiful, unbelievable, indescribable generosity of God in prayer. We ask for gifts, He gives us the Giver. We ask for the supply and He gives us the Source. We ask for money and He gives us the Bank. Isn't that great?

That will motivate your praying. You don't go and ask for \$20.00. You go and say, "Can I have everything?" Doesn't that seem bold? "You know God, I know you've got a universe to run here, but I just need some comfort on what's going on in my life down here, so if you could just, like, send your whole presence to live in me, that would be great." That's what He's promising here.

The Spirit indwells us. We have the resources of heaven living in us. What an incredible promise. The Spirit regenerates and indwells.

The Spirit sanctifies...

The Spirit sanctifies. What do I mean by "sanctifies?" The Spirit transforms our lives into the image of Christ, so that we come to mirror the standing we already have in God's sight. Sanctification is driven by the Trinity. The Father planned for us to be holy (Ephesians 1:4), chosen in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless. The Son died for us to be holy. He gave Himself up for us to make us holy, to present us to Himself as a radiant church without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. The Father planned for us to be holy, the Son died for us to be holy, and the Spirit works for us to be holy.

Sanctification is centered on Christ. 2 Corinthians 3:17 is huge. "...We, who with unveiled faces, all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed..." [this is sanctification] "...into His likeness; into the likeness of Christ with ever increasing glory which comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." The picture here is the Spirit. What He talked about is that this is where His humility comes in. The Spirit fixes our hearts on the glory of Christ. We behold the glory of Christ day in and day out and His Word and prayer as we walk in the Spirit. We behold the glory of Christ and, the more we behold Him, the more we become like Him.

This is exactly what we see as parents. When I look at my two precious boys and see their facial expressions, I see their mom's facial expressions in them. When I see their mannerisms, I see mannerisms that reflect their mom. When I hear them talk...this is always a humbling thing isn't it, as a parent to hear your children using your words that they apparently learned from you? Not that we've taught them any bad words or anything, but the picture is the more they behold us, the more they become like us. The more we behold the glory of Christ, the more we become like the glory of Christ. This is what the Spirit is doing in sanctifying.

As we behold the glory of Christ, we're cleansed of past sins. We are washed, sanctified, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God. Remember, the Spirit is convicting us of sin and revealing righteousness to us. As we behold the glory of Christ we are purified of present sin. The very middle of 1 Peter 1:2 states, *"...through the sanctifying work of the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ..."* As we behold the glory of Christ, we are empowered over future sin because He is giving us power—the power of Christ that defeats sin. We are not a defeated people when it comes to our battles with sin. We are victorious people. We do not fight to earn a position of victory; we fight from a position of victory in the Spirit. That's huge!

He changes our desires. Those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. That heart change He began in regeneration needs to continue more and more and more and more and more, so that we don't want what the world says we need or what would satisfy us. We want what Christ says, and the Spirit is changing our desires and developing our discipline. This is why we pray, and we study the Word, and we fast, and we practice spiritual disciplines.

We do this because they are means of grace. They're means by which the Spirit of God changes our hearts and changes our desires, to which we come in to life and are being led by the Spirit, not under law. We're careful in our spiritual disciplines. We must be careful not to make these just more things we're doing to try to earn our way to God, but these are the means by which we experience the grace of God on a daily basis. The Spirit sanctifies us.

The Spirit comforts...

The Spirit comforts. What it means for the Spirit to comfort is that He comes alongside us. *"I will ask the Father and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever."* (John 14:16) The word here is used five different times in the New Testament to refer to the Spirit, which is "paraclete." This word literally means, "One who is called alongside."

It's really interesting when you start looking at this word in different translations—and there are a myriad of translations—Counselor, Helper, Advocate, Comforter, Strengthener, Supporter, Advisor, Ally, Champion. This is a great word. It gives a picture—don't miss this—of what Jesus is talking about when he says the Father *"will give you another Comforter."* Basically, what He's saying to His disciples there in John 14 is, "I've been with you and I've cared for you. I've been your Helper, your Comforter, your Counselor, your Strengthener, and your Supporter. I've been that. I'm going to send another One to you; someone who brings the same comfort and strength, advocacy, support...all of these things." There's a picture here of "another."

Which leads to the next bullet point here. The Spirit is our sacred advocate. Our sacred advocate. A "paraclete" in the first century was someone who would give assistance to you in a court of law. A legal advisor would speak on your behalf. That's what an advocate would do. 1 John 2 talks about Jesus as the One who is our Advocate, who speaks to the Father in our defense and what Jesus is saying is, "There's one coming who will be your Advocate."

The Spirit is our sacred Advocate, and the Spirit is our strong Comforter. That word comfort—just very simply—is two pieces together. It is "fortis" —a picture of strength, and "com" means "with strength." So, it is one who comes alongside you with strength, our strong Comforter. He gives strength in the heat of battle. This is what I love about John 16:7, *"...It is good for you that I'm going away..."* His disciples were wrestling and struggling with this, and He says, "It's good for you...unless I go away the Counselor will not come to you." He encourages them at the end of that chapter with, *"I told you these things so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble, but take heart, I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33)

When we walk through trouble, when we go through difficult times, it is the Spirit of God who is our Comforter. I know that, across this room, there are people tonight who are walking through things in their families, things in their lives—some things that probably nobody else here knows about. I want you to know that the Spirit of God knows about these things. He is your strong Comforter. He is with you. His strength is with you in the heat of the battle. Not only in the heat of the battle, but He gives solace in the heart of our pain. Strength in the heat of the battle and solace in the heart of our pain. The Spirit comforts.

The Spirit teaches...

The Spirit teaches. The Holy Spirit takes all that belongs to Christ and makes it known to us. I mentioned this in the very beginning today when we were looking at Exodus 33. John 16:12-15, at the very end of that passage *"...the Spirit will take from what is mine and*

make it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine; that's why I said that the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you." Here's the reality: we need the Spirit to know God. Anything we know about God comes from whom? The Spirit. There is nothing we know about God that doesn't come from the Spirit. That's based on 1 Corinthians 2:10-12, because God has revealed it to us by His Spirit. The Spirit of God knows all the things of God, and He reveals the things of God to us by His Spirit.

We need the Spirit to know God, but not only to know God, we need the Spirit to know ourselves. He testifies to us about who we are. This is the passage in Romans 8:15-17, "*The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.*" He testifies to us. He convinces us. He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness. He reminds us. The Spirit has a reminding function, to remind us who we are in Christ and to remind us of what we have in Christ. He will teach you all things and will remind you of everything God has said to you. The Spirit—we need Him to know God, and we need the Spirit to know ourselves.

The Spirit teaches the Word to us. Here's the reality: without the spirit we are dead—but don't miss this—the Spirit and the Word go together because He is a teacher. Without the Spirit we're dead. Without the Word we're deluded, and this is where we've got to be careful, especially, when we talk about some of the things we're going to talk about later on. If we disregard the Word and jump into the pool of experience with the Spirit so that we attribute everything to the Spirit, but we leave the Word behind, we will be led into delusions that are not what the Scriptures intend. Without the Spirit we're dead, without the Word we're deluded.

How does the Spirit teach us the Word? We looked at Ezekiel earlier, the Old Testament prophet, regarding revelation and inspiration. The prophet receives the word; the prophet relays the word. How does the Spirit teach us the Word? Well, first of all, you've got revelation. That's what we've already seen. One instance is in Revelation 1:10-11 where John states, "*On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, which said: 'Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches...'*" Revelation.

So, the Spirit reveals the Word to John here. Then, inspiration is the next step. Revelation and inspiration. Those who are writing Scripture relay the Word to us. "*All Scripture is God-breathed...*" 2 Peter 1:21, "*Men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit*"—this is just an incredible picture. I wish we had time to camp out on so many of these different things, but see the Spirit of God coming upon men who wrote this book through their lives, through their minds, through their hearts, in their style, with their pens, giving us the Word that is completely authoritative, that is completely from a Divine Author but written through human authors. The miracle of inspiration that is going on here is really just unfathomable. It's exciting to see how different authors—especially in the New Testament—write in different ways. They do things differently, but it's all truth. It's all coming from one Divine Author through a variety of different human authors in this process called "inspiration."

Next is illumination. The Spirit illuminates. This is where we come in. The Word is revealed, inspired and then, we need the Holy Spirit to open our eyes to understand what is written here. "*Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.*" (Psalm 119:18) "*...That the eyes of your heart may be enlightened...*" (Ephesians 1:18) You have an anointing to know the truth. We've got to realize that a Christian reads this book radically different than a non-Christian. Those who have the Spirit of Christ in them read this book radically different than those who do not have the Spirit of Christ in them. This is not just a book we

sit down with and read like any novel or any other book. There is a process going on here where God, by His Spirit, is revealing His Word. It's been inspired, and He is now opening our eyes to understand it through this process of illumination.

This leads to proclamation where we take this Word, and we proclaim it. So, what do we do practically? Here's my encouragement: read revelation. Not the last book in the New Testament, but read this revelation. This is the Word of God. Read it! Then, study inspiration. As you read it, think through "Who is writing this? What was the situation when they were writing it? How is the Spirit inspiring this Word? What is the purpose of this book? What is the purpose of this verse? What was the Spirit doing in the first century when Paul is writing this letter?" Ask those kinds of questions. Review the whole "How to Study the Bible Secret Church" that we looked at a short time ago.

Read revelation, study inspiration, then pray for illumination. Read Scripture like you're dependent on the Spirit. Let's be people who avoid just sitting down, opening up the book, and then, just starting to read. Let's realize, "I need the Spirit of God to help me understand anything in this book." Let's be dependent and desperate for the Spirit in the way we read and then practice proclamation. Once you read it, reproduce it. Proclaim it wherever you go. Read revelation. Study inspiration. Pray for illumination. Practice proclamation.

The Spirit guides...

The Spirit guides. We're flying through these twelve. The Spirit guides us. The Holy Spirit leads God's people to accomplish God's will. Led by the Spirit of God—Romans 8 talks about it; Galatians 5 talks about it. The Spirit of God guides individuals. We can look at this in the New Testament. In Acts 8, the Spirit tells Philip to go to the chariot and stay near it. At some points, the Spirit even transports people. "*When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away...*" (Acts 8:39) That would be pretty cool!

He did this in the Old Testament. Elijah, Elisha, same kind of thing. When you look at Paul in Acts 16:6-7, he looks like a pinball machine. Paul starts to go one way, and the Spirit says, "No, not there." He starts to go another way, and the Spirit says, "No, not there." The Spirit is leading and guiding him. Then, you get to Acts 20:22-23—this is really interesting: "*...compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me.*" The reality is the Spirit in Acts 20 is leading Paul to a place where he will be imprisoned.

Does that comfort you? Do you want to follow the Spirit? Our brothers and sisters around the world are following the Spirit, and it's costing them their lives. We cannot sit back here and say, "Well, the Spirit will never lead me to a place where I'm uncomfortable. The Spirit will never lead me to a place that would be dangerous." If we're going to follow the Spirit, we may be going to the most dangerous places and the most uncomfortable places. He is guiding us. The Spirit guides individuals, and the Spirit guides the Church. Acts 15:28 is a great, great verse: "*It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us...*" this is the Church making the decision saying, "*It was good to the Holy Spirit and to us...*"

How specific is God's will for your life?

Here's the question: How specific is God's will for your life? I want to throw something practical in here. This is one of the biggest questions with which we wrestle. "Okay, if the Spirit is guiding me, how do I know what He is guiding me to do? How do I make decisions?" We come up with all kinds of different methods for discovering what the Spirit is doing. We've got the "random finger method" where we just kind of do the whole deal and "this is what the Spirit's guiding me to do." A buddy of mine really wanted to date this girl,

and she wanted nothing to do with him. So, he did the “random finger method” and came to Romans 8:25 which says, “*But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.*” So, he just experienced this “illuminating moment.” “This is it! I’m just supposed to wait for her patiently.” The only problem is he waited and waited and waited. She apparently wasn’t responding to that particular move of the Spirit, and it never happened! The only problem is Romans 8 is not talking about waiting on a girl to be interested in you. It’s talking about waiting for the redemption of our bodies in heaven. So, don’t do the “random finger method” and just twist Scripture.

There’s the “miraculous event method.” You know, maybe a burning bush is going to come about. Anybody seen a burning bush? One that talks to you? Okay, apparently not the most popular method. The “striking coincidence method.” This is a good one! Let’s say you’re all college students tonight. Say you’re struggling with what to major in. You want to either major in English or Math for some reason. You would like to major in either one of those, and you go to bed one night and wake up all of a sudden and roll over in the middle of the night. You look at the clock, and it says 2:22. You think, “Well, that’s kind of weird.” You go back to sleep, and the next night, you go to bed and wake up in the middle of the night, and you roll over, and the clock says 3:33. You’re thinking “Wow! This is pretty crazy!” So, you go to bed the next night, and you wake up in the middle of the night, and you roll over and the clock says 4:44. So, you get out of bed and you’re on your knees, “Math! It is math! Thank you Spirit of God!” Maybe the Spirit is telling you to drink some Nyquil and get some sleep!

Stick with the college student analogy. You’re walking on campus, and you’re praying. Guys, you’re praying about your future wife. You’re walking on campus, and you start kicking this Sprite can that someone has littered there. You’re kicking it, and you look up and there’s this group of girls, and there’s one girl with this bright green jacket on. It reflects the Sprite can. “This is it!” The only problem here is your theology is now built on God causing someone to litter at the very place that you were going to walk, and it’s a good thing that they littered a Sprite can instead of a Coke can or throwing something else down because you would have looked at the wrong girl, and the whole universe would’ve been messed up. So, it’s not the “striking coincidence method.”

The “cast the fleece method.” Well, that’s biblical, right? Well, no, that’s a picture of Gideon’s lack of faith, not genuine faith. What about the “opened door/closed door method?” We’ve got all kinds of methods! Let’s try the “read your Bible method.” The “read your Bible method” and the “live in the Spirit method.” So, how does that look? Then, think about it. How specific is God’s will for our lives? Does the Spirit of God lead us in everything? Yes? No? He leads us in everything. Does that mean the Spirit is the One who tells us whether or not to go to Moe’s or Chipotle? Where do we go? “Spirit, where are you telling me to go?” How does this work? How do we know where the Spirit of God is leading us? What kind of rice do you want? “Spirit of God, show me the rice!”

Here’s what I’m going to encourage you to do—real quickly—I want to take you back to the doctrine of God stuff that we talked about before. Remember the two wills of God? God’s revealed will: what He declares in His Word. We talked about how God reveals His will to us in His Word. He gives us commands that are in His Word. This is His will. At the same time, you’ve got God’s secret will. It’s not perfect terminology, but it is what He decrees in the world. There are things that happen in the world that don’t go according to the Word. Does that mean they’re outside of His will? No, they’re in His will, but they’re against His Word. So, you’ve got God’s revealed will, what He declares in His Word, and His secret will, what He decrees in the world.

Now, God's secret will—that second facet—is absolutely specific. Nothing happens apart from God's activity. Nothing happens accidentally. You have Scriptures that are mentioned all throughout there. Just "...as God has planned...so it will stand" Isaiah 14:24 says. Nothing is happening accidentally. There is nothing happening that is out of the control of God in His sovereignty. Nothing happens accidentally. Everything happens purposefully. God is working in all things—everything—purposefully. So, that's His secret will.

Now, His declared will—what He declares in His Word, His revealed will. What we have in the Word here that's clearly specific. Now, this is good news for everybody in this room who is looking to find God's will. The good news is, it's not lost. Scripture is telling us to walk in it. Walk in His will. So how do I know? We will never do anything outside of the decreed will of God here, but there are times when we certainly disobey the revealed, declared Word of God. Make sense?

What is the Spirit leading me to do?

So then, what is the Spirit leading me to do? This is what God's revealed will is in His word, clearly: Be saved and be Spirit-filled. This is key—be Spirit-filled. He has put His presence in you to guide you. Be sanctified—He tells us "be holy." This is part of the work of the Spirit as we've already seen. Be submissive. By submissive, I mean, wherever the Spirit leads, wherever He tells you to go, you go because you're submissive. Saved, Spirit-filled, sanctified, submissive.

So, when it comes to specific decisions, what do I do? If I have a decision to make such as "Where do I go to college" and it's not in the Scriptures? Or who do I marry, and it's not in this book? Or do I go to Chipotle or Moe's? What do I do? In making specific decisions, consult the Word. Does God's revealed will (i.e. Scripture) prohibit this action? Does it tell you what to do or not to do? Will this action cause you to neglect a command in God's revealed will? If the Word addresses it, obey the Word. That's clear. The Spirit will always lead you according to this book—always, always, always. So, if this book has anything to say about it, then follow the book. Obey the Word.

Exercise wisdom. In areas where His Word is not as clear, exercise wisdom. Pray confidently. Ask the Spirit of Wisdom in you. Gather information, as much information as you can. Consider all your options. Seek godly council and choose wisely. Here's the thing: the Spirit is good in us. We don't have time to read through Proverbs 2:1-11 but put a star by that passage. If you have struggled with guidance in your life, go back and read Proverbs 2:1-11. Maybe even memorize it. It's an incredible passage of Scripture. There's incredible confidence here that leads to this last encouragement.

You consult the Word, you exercise wisdom, and then you say, "Spirit of God, I want you to lead me and guide me and show me what to do." Then, you do what you want. If you're saved, Spirit-filled, sanctified and submissive, then you can have freedom to follow the Spirit. You don't have to spend a half hour in prayer to decide where the Spirit is leading you to go to lunch—just go! Let the Spirit lead you.

Let's be honest, we don't premeditate 95% of our behavior. This is the beauty of the Spirit of God being in us. This is why we don't have a road map where God says, "Do this, this and this." Instead He says, "I put my Spirit in you, and I will lead you. I will guide your thinking, your thoughts, your decision-making. Be saved, be Spirit-filled, be submissive to me, be sanctified, pursue holiness." If you're indulging in sin over here and asking for God's direction over there, you've missed the point. God's direction is clear: get rid of the sin. Get rid of the sin. The Spirit is leading you to do that, and then walk in the Spirit. The Spirit guides us like that.

The Spirit intercedes...

The Spirit intercedes. The Spirit enables us to pray according to the Father's will. That's what I mean by "intercedes" —what Scripture means by "the Spirit intercedes." The Son intercedes for us. The Son is interceding for us according to Romans 8:34, and the Spirit intercedes within us according to Romans 8:26-27: *"The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express, and he who searches our hearts knows the mind and the spirit because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will."*

I think this is one of the most comforting passages in Scripture. We continually face times in each of our lives, in our circumstances, where we don't know how to pray, and we don't even know sometimes what to pray for. Sometimes, we may not even have the desire. The Spirit intercedes for us; the Spirit helps us in our weakness. Now, the question is how does that work? How does the Spirit intercede for us? What happens when He does that?

The Spirit intercedes for our good. In order to understand what the Spirit is doing in intercession, we've got to tie Romans 8:26-27 to Romans 8:28. *"We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him and have been called according to his purpose."* Now, here's the picture: our Father always wants what is best for us as His children. The Father always gives what is best. We sometimes don't know what is best for us. We often times don't know what is best for us. So, what the Spirit does is intercede for us in groans that words cannot express. We don't know what's best in our lives, and the beauty of it is, God gives us the Holy Spirit to guide our praying. He conforms our prayers to what He knows is best for us because He is interceding for the saints in accordance with—what?—God's will, and His will is *"to work all things together for good for those who love him and are called according to his purpose."*

Now, this is a side note that I'm bringing in here. The secret to prayer is this—if you want to get everything you ask for in prayer, here's the secret. Ready? Make your wants God's wants. There are two steps. Make your wants God's wants, and then second, pray for whatever you want. You'll get it. You'll get it! That's the secret. Make your wants God's wants, and then pray for whatever you want, and you'll get it. 1 John 5:15 states, *"And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him."* You can be confident in that, and the Spirit makes this a reality because the Spirit transforms our wants into God's wants. The Spirit then helps us pray for what God wants. The Spirit transforms our prayers according to the Father's will in our lives. This is where His interceding work is tied with His sanctifying work, which is what Romans 8:29-30 talks about.

Very practically, where does that take us? Should we pray to the Spirit? Do we pray to the Spirit? On one hand, the answer is "yes" because the Spirit is God. So, theologically, it's not wrong to pray to the Spirit because the Spirit is God. On the other hand, in Scripture no one prays to the Spirit. There are, actually, only a limited number of times where anyone prays specifically to Jesus as the addressee in prayer. Steven in Acts 7, Paul in 2 Corinthians 12 and 1 Corinthians 2. Most often you don't see people praying to the Spirit but people praying to the Father. *"Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak with great boldness,"* (Acts 4:29) and the Spirit comes upon them and enables them to do that.

How should we pray? Here's where I think Scripture encourages us to pray: not that it's wrong because the Spirit is God, not that it's necessarily theologically wrong, but Scripture really doesn't give us a pattern of praying to the Spirit. So, what Scripture teaches us to do

is pray to the Father. *"This is how you should pray 'Our Father in heaven...'"* Pray to the Father; pray in the name of the Son. We approach the Father with confidence Hebrews 4:14-16 says. Pray to the Father in the name of the Son in dependence on the Spirit. Pray to the Father in the name of the Son in dependence on the Spirit, plus the Spirit intercedes for us.

The Spirit unifies...

The Spirit unifies. What does that mean? The Spirit creates a profound oneness in the people of God. The Holy Spirit creates the fellowship there. There's a great quote here about the "*ecclesia*"—the Church—the gathering of God's people. It's never conceived of in the New Testament as an institution but, exclusively, as a fellowship of persons, a common life based on fellowship in Jesus Christ. Fellowship of the Spirit and fellowship with Christ.

Here's what the Spirit does in the Church. He destroys barriers. This is so clear if you look in these two passages in Acts 15 and Ephesians 2. Acts 15 is when the Spirit leads the church to receive the Gentiles and not put a bunch of extra rules on them. When you read Ephesians 2, you see Paul writing to a congregation in Ephesus that is part Jewish-Christians and part Gentile-Christians. The Gentile-Christians felt like second-class Christians, and he's saying, "You're together in this thing. We both have access to the Father by one Spirit." So, He destroys the barriers between Jews and Gentiles. It was so huge in that day that we don't even realize what mammoth stuff is going on here in Acts 15 and Ephesians 1 and 2. We don't realize the divide there that the Spirit was destroying. He destroys barriers and brings peace. *"Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."* (Ephesians 4:3-6)

Here's the effect of the Spirit's work in the Church: what does the Spirit do in the church? He brings unprecedented unity with one another. You see that picture in Acts 2:44-47. Unity—an unselfish dependence on one another. *"...We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body...given one Spirit to drink."* Think about this with me. How does the Spirit unify the Church? He does it by doing all these other things. He regenerates us; He sanctifies us; He is making us more and more like Christ as we're all beholding the glory of Christ. He's comforting each of us; He is strengthening us; He is teaching each of us the same truth; He is guiding each of us; He is interceding for each of us. Unity in the Church is the supernatural by-product of the Spirit in our lives. This is not some man-contrived, man-manufactured unity that we need to come together and try to figure out how to get unified. We need to get in step with the Spirit, and the Spirit will unify us. We need to be obedient to the Spirit, and the Spirit will do this. The Spirit unifies.

The Spirit bears fruit...

The Spirit bears fruit. The fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22-23 is a contrast with Galatians 5:19-21 where Paul talks about the works of the flesh are these things, then the fruit of the Spirit are these things. So, fruit of the Spirit is supernaturally produced. There's a contrast here. What it means for the Spirit to bear fruit is He produces the life of Christ in every facet of our character—supernaturally. Works in our flesh are natural; they're man-made. The Spirit is doing supernatural things. The fruit of the Spirit is extraordinarily expressed. Not ordinary, but extraordinary. The works of the flesh are ordinary. The Spirit doesn't give us some man-manufactured love; He bears in us supernatural, extraordinary love. You see this contrast between that which is of the flesh and the Spirit. We're going to fly through these but just think about it, when it comes to love, fleshly love is conditional. Spiritual love, supernatural, extraordinary love is unconditional. Fleshly love—conditional. Spiritual love—unconditional.

Joy. Fleshly joy is susceptible to circumstances. Spiritual joy supersedes circumstances. The disciples were filled with joy through the Holy Spirit in Acts 13:52. What's wild about that is it's just after Paul and Barnabas have been persecuted and expelled from a region, and they walk away filled with joy in the Holy Spirit. Joy supersedes circumstances.

Peace. Fleshly peace is partial and fleeting. Spiritual peace is complete and eternal. Partial and fleeting...complete and eternal. Mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace. Peace and joy. Do we want peace? It conquers our anxiety and our worry. It comes from the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit.

Patience. Fleshly patience is triggered by a short fuse. Spiritual patience perseveres through long-suffering. "*Be patient, bearing with one another in love.*" (Ephesians 4:2)

Kindness. Fleshly kindness is quick to condemn. Spiritual kindness is quick to show compassion. Compassion flowing. Goodness. Fleshly goodness produces inevitable hypocrisy. Spiritual goodness produces consistent integrity. Integrity—that which is good, not hypocritical. We are children of light, righteousness and truth. Faithfulness. Fleshly faithfulness creates inevitable doubt. Spiritual faithfulness reflects consistent devotion. "*Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.*" (Revelation 2:10-11) Consistent devotion. Gentleness. Fleshly gentleness exerts power with arrogance. Spiritual gentleness surrenders to real power with humility. We humble ourselves before the Lord. Our gentleness is expressed in humility. Not having to assert our power but to submit to His power.

Self-control. Fleshly self-control indulges in excessive pursuits. Spiritual self-control expresses disciplined passion. That phrase "disciplined passion" —that's self-control. We crucify the sinful nature with its passions and desires. We live by the Spirit with new passions, but they're disciplined, controlled passions. Obviously, this fruit is a portrait of Christ. It's extremely important that, well, we'll talk about that later. The Spirit bears fruit in us. The Spirit produces the life and character of Christ in every facet of our character.

The Spirit gives gifts...

The Spirit gives gifts. We're going to talk about this more in the next section. By His grace, the Holy Spirit equips every Christian to edify the Church for the glory of Christ. Spiritual gifts are given by God's Spirit. He's the One who gives them and they're given according to God's sovereignty. He gives them as Christ apportions them. The Spirit gives gifts.

The Spirit incites worship...

The Spirit incites worship. The Spirit leads the church to glorify God through Jesus Christ. This is a great picture. In Ephesians 5:18 it says, "*Be filled with the Spirit.*" What comes right after that? "*Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart for the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

We misdefine worship according to external circumstances. Where do you worship? What kind of music do you have? Do you like this or that about worship? Jesus redefines worship according to internal circumstances because worship is dependent on His presence—not on what kind of instruments you have or what kind of ability you have or how many millions of dollars of sound system or the building or all the trappings there are. Instead, the reality of His presence is what incites worship in us. Regardless of where you are, it's the reality of His presence and the response of our hearts. "*Sing and make music in your hearts toward the Lord.*" That's great news for those who are not very gifted in making music with the mouth—the heart is important. Just remember that.

When we are filled with the Spirit, here's what we do. We express praise with one another, speak to one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. You want to see the work of the Spirit? See people praising God with one another and extending thanks to God, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything. We worship in spirit and truth. Worship without the Spirit is hypocrisy. If we worship without the Spirit, we are hypocritical. We are a dead people. Without the Spirit it is hypocrisy. Worship without the truth is idolatry. There must be spirit and truth. Worship in any church represented, when we gather together, must be spirit and truth. Without the Spirit it's hypocrisy; without the truth it's idolatry.

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