

# 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*

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*Rom. 3:22-24*

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*Eph. 1:6, 7*

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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.**

## 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?

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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?**

## 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?

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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?

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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.

## “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?

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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?

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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?**

## 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”?**

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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.**

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**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?

## The Locked Door

Tabitha Churu

Pastor and Mrs. David Churu of Kenya were living in a second-floor apartment. On Friday night they locked the front door and their bedroom door for extra security before going to bed.

The next morning Mrs. Churu got up to prepare breakfast, but she could not unlock the bedroom door. Her husband tried, but he could not unlock the door either. He tried prying the door open, but it would not budge. After several minutes the couple prayed. “Lord, help us. We need to get to the church where the people are waiting for us, but the door will not open.”

Pastor Churu examined the faulty key, but he could see nothing different about it. It had locked the door the night before; why did it not unlock the door? The couple remembered that their neighbor had duplicate keys to their apartment. They leaned out the window and asked someone to go to the neighbor’s apartment and ask them to bring their keys. Perhaps the spare key would unlock the door.

The neighbor soon appeared outside and tossed the keys up to the pastor, who caught them. The key ring had many keys, and they all looked alike. Which one was the correct key? Pastor Churu chose a key and slipped it into the lock. It turned, and the door slid open. He looked at the key that had opened the door; it was nothing like the key that had been made for the lock. How could this key open the door when their own key couldn’t?

The couple returned the keys and hurried to church for the final meeting of the evangelistic series they were holding. When he called for decisions that day 30 people asked for baptism.

Joyfully the couple returned from church. They stopped and asked their neighbor if they could borrow the keys again to see why the neighbor’s key had opened their door when their own key would not. They tried all the neighbor’s keys, but none of them would unlock the door. Then they tried their own key, the one that would not work that morning. It worked perfectly, and continued to work for as long as they lived in that apartment.

Pastor Churu suspects that the devil did not want them to go to church that day. He thanks God for overcoming the devil’s mischief and freeing them from their room. They thank God even more for using them to free searching people from Satan’s powers.

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*Tabitha Churu and her pastor husband are students at the University of Eastern Africa in Baraton, Kenya.*