

The Ministries of the Holy Spirit, Part 2

Scripture: Galatians 3:1–5

Code: 90-32

INTRODUCTION

A. The Purpose

The purpose of this study is to call Christians back to living on the spiritual plane. Somehow many Christians have drifted away from believing in the sufficiency of the Holy Spirit for all matters of Christian living. Instead they have substituted all kinds of earthly things for His supernatural power. My earnest desire is to see Christians return to depending on the power of God's Spirit so they will know the joy and victory that only He can give.

B. The Passage

In Galatians 3:1 5 Paul says, "You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Did you suffer so many things in vain if indeed it was in vain? Does He then, who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?"

C. The Problem

1. As confronted by Paul

The Galatian believers were saved by the power of God's Spirit but were attempting to be sanctified by their own efforts. Paul confronted the folly of their thinking by reminding them that what was begun by the Spirit couldn't be sustained by human effort. His indictment was direct because the issue was serious. And I believe it's a timeless indictment that also relates directly to us. Obviously the culture and specific circumstances are different, but the problem of attempting to perfect in the flesh what was begun in the Spirit remains the same.

2. As illustrated by Joseph Carroll

I recently heard pastor Joseph Carroll tell this story of when he was conducting a series of meetings in North Carolina. He was staying in the home of some close friends in Asheville and would travel each night to his various speaking engagements. One night he was scheduled to speak at a church in Greenville, South Carolina, which is several hours from Asheville. Because he didn't have a car, some folks from Greenville volunteered to transport him to and from the meeting. When they arrived to pick him up, He bid farewell to his hosts and told them he hoped to be back by midnight or soon afterward. After ministering at the Greenville church, he stayed awhile to enjoy some fellowship and then rode back to Asheville. As he approached the house, he saw the porch light on and assumed his hosts would be prepared for his arrival because he had discussed the time of his return with them. As he got out of the car, he sent his driver on his way, saying, "You must hurry. You have a long drive back. I'm sure they're prepared for me; I'll have no problem." He felt the bitter cold of the winter night as he walked the long distance to the house. By the time he reached the porch, his nose and ears were numb. He tapped gently on the door but no one answered. He tapped a little harder and then even harder but still no reply. Finally, in a bit of a concern about the cold, he tapped on the kitchen door and on a side window but there was no response. Somewhat frustrated and becoming

colder by the moment, he decided to walk to a neighboring house so he could call and awaken his hosts. Then he realized that knocking on someone's door after midnight wasn't a safe thing to do so he decided to find a public telephone. It was very dark and cold and he wasn't familiar with the area. Consequently he walked for several miles. At one point he slipped as he walked in the wet grass that was growing on the bank along the road and slid down into two feet of water. Soaked and nearly frozen, he crawled back up to the road and walked further until he finally saw a blinking motel light. He awakened the motel manager, who was gracious enough to let him use the phone. He made the call and said to his sleepy host, "I hate to disturb you, but I couldn't get anyone to wake up in the house. I'm several miles down the road at the motel. Could you come get me?" To which his host replied, "Joseph, you have a key in your overcoat pocket. I gave it to you before you left." Sure enough, he reached into his pocket and there was the key. That story is a picture of many Christians. They want access to the house of blessing. They want comfort, warmth, rest, peace, nourishment, and fellowship. And they try a variety of human schemes to get in all of which are unsuccessful. Yet all the while they possess the key: the Holy Spirit. He alone can relieve their frustrations and fulfill the deepest longings of their hearts. How have so many Christians been deceived into thinking they can gain entrance into the house of blessing by relying on pragmatism, psychotherapy, and other human means when Scripture clearly teaches that the Holy Spirit is the key to God's provisions?

D. The Provision

God provides everything we need for life and godliness. We need only turn to Him.

1. Psalm 23:1-6

Psalm 23 illustrates the sufficiency of God's provision to believers: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want" (v. 1). I can go to God for anything I lack and He will supply my needs. If I need food or water, "He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters" (v. 2). Similarly, if my soul is weak and weary "He restores my soul" (v. 3). If I'm lost and don't know how to chart the course of my life "He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake" (v. 3). Someday I will have to face the reality of death, but "even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for Thou art with me" (v. 4). I am often distressed and in upheaval, but "Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me" (v. 4). I am concerned about those around me who are hostile, but "Thou dost prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies" (v. 5). I need healing so "Thou hast anointed my head with oil" (v. 5). It's a long life and I want to make the best of it, so He makes "my cup [overflow]. Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life" (vv. 5-6). And I desperately want hope after death, so He promises that "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (v. 6). Our Shepherd graciously supplies everything we need. Why would we go anywhere else?

2. Colossians 2:10: Paul said, "In [Christ] you have been made complete."

3. Ephesians 1:3: God "has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."

4. Philippians 4:13, 19: Paul said, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me... My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

5. 2 Peter 1:3: Christ "has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness."

Can it be that we have forgotten those provisions? How else can we account for so many Christians attempting to satisfy spiritual needs by human means? Paul said that all such attempts are foolish (Gal. 3:3). Why then do we continue to fall victim to our own inability? That only increases our frustration as we realize we can't solve our problems apart from God's Spirit.

E. The Pattern

Every issue of life that a Christian faces can be resolved in the power and presence of God. That truth has been the foundation of spiritual commitment for centuries. Throughout the history of the church, the greatest men of God have been men of prayer, striving for intimate communion with God.

They knew that the Christian life, which begins in the Spirit, could only be sustained by the Spirit.

1. The example of St. Augustine the theologian

St. Augustine prayed in his Confessions, "Hide not Thy face from me. Oh! That I might repose on Thee. Oh! That Thou wouldest enter into my heart and inebriate it, that I may forget my ills and embrace Thee, my sole good."

2. The example of Asaph the psalmist

In Psalm 73:25 he declares, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And besides Thee, I desire nothing on earth."

3. The example of Hudson Taylor the missionary

Taylor's son wrote, "Frequently those who were wakeful in the little house at Chinkiang [in China] might hear, at two or three in the morning, the soft refrain of Mr. Taylor's favorite hymn [Jesus, I am resting, resting, in the joy of what Thou art...]. He had learned that for him, only one life was possible just that blessed life of resting and rejoicing in the Lord under all circumstances, while He dealt with the difficulties, inward and outward, great and small" (Dr. Howard Taylor, Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret [Chicago: Moody, 1932], p. 209).

Dr. Taylor also recorded a journal entry showing how his father dealt with grief and loneliness following his first wife's death: "How lonesome ... were the weary hours when confined to my room. How I missed my dear wife... The Lord had made [this] passage so real to me, 'Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.' Twenty times a day, perhaps, as I felt the heart thirst coming back, I cried to Him: 'Lord, you promised! You promised me that I should never thirst.' And whether I called by day or night, how quickly He always came and satisfied my sorrowing heart! So much so that I often wondered whether it were possible that my loved one who had been taken could be enjoying more of His presence than I was in my lonely chamber" (Hudson Taylor and The China Inland Mission: The Growth of a Work of God [London: Religious Tract Society, 1940], p. 200).

REVIEW

We have seen that the Christian life begins when the Holy Spirit brings conviction, repentance, and regeneration. He also indwells, baptizes, gifts, secures, and separates the believer from sin and death. That's how believers begin in the Spirit and they'll be perfected in the Spirit by means of His sanctifying work.

I. THE HOLY SPIRIT PROVIDES ACCESS TO GOD

II. THE HOLY SPIRIT ILLUMINATES SCRIPTURE

LESSON

III. THE HOLY SPIRIT GLORIFIES CHRIST

The Spirit glorifies Christ by revealing His majesty and glory in Scripture and by producing Christ centered lives in believers. A life that is focused on knowing, loving, obeying, and serving Christ brings honor to Him by placing His characteristics on display to the watching world (Matt. 5:16).

A. As Explained by Jesus

1. John 15:26: Jesus said, "When the Helper [the Holy Spirit] comes, whom I will send to you from the Father ... He will bear witness of Me." The Spirit bears witness of Christ by revealing His glory.

2. John 16:13-15: Jesus also said, "When He, the Spirit of Truth, comes ... He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said, that He takes of Mine, and will disclose it to you."

B. As Explained by Paul

1. 1 Corinthians 12:3

Paul said, "I make known to you, that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, 'Jesus is accursed.'" Apparently some of the Corinthians had called Jesus accursed while speaking in an ecstatic language that they thought was prompted by the Holy Spirit. But the Spirit would never do that. Such practices were reflective of the spiritual abuses taking place in the Corinthian church at that time. Paul continued, "No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit" (v. 3). Just as God alone grants faith and repentance, He also grants the ability to confess Jesus as Lord, which He does through His Spirit. The Spirit exalts and affirms the lordship of Christ for two reasons: 1. He enables believers to see Christ's glory majesty, and authority so they might submit to His will; 2. He enables believers to see Christ's purity and righteousness so they will pattern their lives after His.

Is Christ Precious to You?

The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ to believers. In a practical sense that means Christ becomes increasingly significant and precious to us as we walk in the Spirit and are filled by Him. Conversely if we're walking in the flesh, we will short circuit the Spirit's ministry and Christ will seem less precious to us. Just how precious Christ is to you is an indication of where you are spiritually.

2. 2 Corinthians 3:18

Exodus 34:29 tells us that the face of Moses shone after He met with God on Mount Sinai. God had allowed Moses to see a portion of His glory (Ex. 33:18-23) and somehow His glory radiated from Moses' face. Paul drew an analogy from the experience of Moses and said in effect that anyone who gazes at the glory of Christ will become like Him and radiate His glory. The more of Christ you see, the more like Him you become. That's the gist of 2 Corinthians 3:18: "We all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit." As we gaze at Christ in God's Word, we go from one level of glory to the next we become more like Him, and that's the Spirit's work. The literal Greek text reads, "It's being done from the Lord the Spirit." The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ by placing His glory on display through the Word and by transforming believers into His image. The more we meditate on Christ's beauty and majesty, the more we become like Him. Paul longed to see Christ's glory reflected in every believer. He told the Galatians, "I am ... in labor until Christ is formed in you" (Gal. 4:19). But for that to happen they had to forsake their attempts to be sanctified by human efforts and return to depending on the Holy Spirit. It's the same for us. We can't become like Christ through human efforts apart from the Spirit.

IV. THE HOLY SPIRIT GUIDES BELIEVERS

In addition to revealing God's truth in Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16), the Spirit guides believers into God's will. That principle is taught throughout Scripture.

A. As Explained by Ezekiel

Ezekiel 36:27 says, "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances." That's a promise of the New Covenant, which includes all believers. If revealing and illuminating God's truth was the extent of the Spirit's ministry, why would we need Him in us? But the Spirit also applies Scripture to our lives thereby transforming us and producing obedience to God's will.

B. As Explained by David

1. Psalm 143:10: David prayed, "Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God." Is that your prayer also?

2. Psalm 119:35 36, 133: David also prayed, "Make me walk in the path of Thy commandments, for I delight in it. Incline my heart to Thy testimonies... Establish my footsteps in Thy word, and do not let any iniquity have dominion over me."
3. Psalm 51:6: David said, "Thou [God] dost desire truth in the innermost being. And in the hidden part Thou wilt make me know wisdom." He knew God would show him His will internally.

C. As Explained by Luke

1. Acts 13:2: When the leaders of the church at Antioch were deciding who to send out as missionaries, the Holy Spirit said to them, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." That was a special revelatory act of the Spirit, but it illustrates His role in guiding the first century church leaders into God's will.
2. Acts 15:28: After considering the issue of how much Jewish law should be imposed on Gentile Christians, the Jerusalem Council drafted a letter explaining their decision. It said in part, "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials." They had arrived at a consensus that was reflective of God's will. How did they know that? Because the Holy Spirit had led them subjectively and had given them that assurance.

D. As Explained by Paul

1. Romans 8:14: Paul said, "All who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." All true believers are led by the Spirit.
2. Romans 9:1: Paul said, "I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit." One way the Spirit guides us is through our conscience.

Do You Have Seemingly Unsolvable Problems?

So many people today are paralyzed with fear and anxiety. They can't solve their problems and they don't know what to do or where to go for help. Perhaps they've turned to the wrong sources for help and found them empty. Sadly, some of those people are Christians. But that shouldn't be. God has not withdrawn His Spirit from us. He's available. And through Him we have access to every resource we need.

Unbelievers must turn to Christ, who will graciously redeem them by the power of His Spirit.

Believers must learn to depend on the Spirit's ministry to sustain them and guide them into God's will. We won't find solutions to our problems in human resources alone.

E. As Explained by A.W. Pink

The theologian A.W. Pink wrote about the subjective leading of the Holy Spirit, saying that those who are directed by Him are moved to examine their hearts and take frequent notice of their ways, mourn over their carnality, confess their sins, and earnestly seek grace to enable them to be obedient (The Holy Spirit [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970], cf. pp. 110 15). To determine if you're being led by the Spirit, ask yourself this: Do you examine your motives and actions? Do you correct your behavior when you're out of line with God's standards? Do you mourn over your sin and eagerly confess it to God? Do you earnestly seek God's grace so you can obey Him? If so, that's evidence that you're walking in the Spirit. And that's how you'll know God's will.

CONCLUSION

The Spirit is both the source and sustainer of our spiritual life. It began with His work of conviction, repentance, and regeneration. He then indwelt, baptized, gifted, secured, and separated us from sin and death. That's what it means to begin in the Spirit (Gal. 3:3). And what was begun by the Spirit cannot be perfected by human efforts apart from His power.

As we continue in the Spirit, He provides access to God, illumination of God's Word, an understanding of Christ's glory, and guidance into God's will. What a wonderful, gracious, and sufficient God we have!

Focusing on the Facts

1. What point does Joseph Carroll's experience in Asheville, North Carolina illustrate?
2. God provides everything we need for _____ and _____.
3. Psalm 23 illustrates the _____ of God's provision to believers.
4. What was Paul's view of God's sufficiency for meeting believer's needs (Phil. 4:19)?
5. How did Charles Spurgeon express the importance of meditating on Christ?
6. What helped Hudson Taylor deal with the loss of his first wife?
7. Identify two ways in which the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ?
8. How does the Holy Spirit bear witness of Christ (John 15:26)?
9. What are two reasons the Holy Spirit exalts and affirms the lordship of Christ?
10. What is one practical result of the Spirit's glorifying Christ?
11. What analogy does Paul use in 2 Corinthians 3:18 to illustrate the transforming work of the Spirit within a believer?
12. What promise is given in Ezekiel 36:27?
13. Are all Christians led by the Holy Spirit? Explain (Rom. 8:14).
14. According to A. W. Pink, how can we know if we are being led by God's Spirit?

Pondering the Principles

1. Joseph Carroll's experience... is a good illustration of our attempts to accomplish God's work by human means apart from divine resources. Unfortunately that's a common problem among Christians. Perhaps you are attempting to solve a problem apart from the Spirit's power. Remember, God has made provision for every human need and His Spirit is the key to gaining access to those provisions. Read Matthew 6:25-34 and Philippians 4:6-9. What specific promises does God make in those passages. What does He require of you? Are you willing to do your part?
2. As the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ in our lives, Christ becomes increasingly significant and precious to us. One way to glorify Christ is to rehearse His characteristics and works. Select one of the following characteristics each day for one week. Meditate on that attribute and its implications in your life. Spend time in prayer thanking Christ for His immeasurable glory and grace.

- His deity Hebrews 1:8
- His creative power Colossians 1:16
- His sinlessness Hebrews 4:15-16
- His changelessness Hebrews 13:8
- His sacrificial love Romans 5:8
- His compassion Matthew 9:36
- His humility Philippians 2:5-7

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