

The Holy Spirit and the Believer Today

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Well, we start a new series today at Truth Community Church. I've been looking forward to this series for a very long time as we are going to study over the next several weeks the Holy Spirit in the church today, and this will be, I believe, a definitive changing study for our church, defining our position on very key matters. There is no doubt that there is great deception throughout the so-called evangelical church that is perpetrated on unsuspecting people in the name of the Holy Spirit in our day and we want to be able to address these things fully and clearly and with precision. Some of what we have to say will, no doubt, be unpopular in some circles, not necessarily in this room but in those that will one day hear it, but we're not worried about popularity among men, we want to be faithful to the word of God. That's the only thing that matters to us at Truth Community Church.

I'm mindful in a time gone by, a way back I was talking with a man about our church and he was somewhat excited but he said, "We're looking for a church that believes in the Holy Spirit." Well, those are loaded words, aren't they? He meant something different than what Scripture says by that. We didn't even have to discuss it, when someone introduces that in the way that he did, you know where they're going, they're looking for a supposed work of the Spirit that is defined in external wonders, in signs, in miracles and different things like that. Rarely, if ever, when people have that on the forefront of their mind, when they have wonders on the front of their brain, rarely are they looking for the true work of the Spirit which is done not in wonders but through the word of God; not in external signs but in an internal sanctification of heart that comes through the power of the word of God, and we need to be very clear on these things as a church.

What we're going to do over the next six or seven weeks, I would say, is we're going to build a fence, I would say, around our church to help understand what the work of the Spirit is and what it is not. The Holy Spirit is God and if you ask me, "Do you believe in the work of the Holy Spirit?" The answer to that question for myself and for this church is, "Yes, absolutely we believe in the work of the Holy Spirit." We believe in the Holy Spirit but we believe in the Holy Spirit according to what the word of God ascribes to him, not what man ascribes to him today in the 21st century necessarily, and we need to ever make that distinction clear in our minds. The Holy Spirit is God. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Blessed Trinity, and the question is that we're going to answer today and next week, is what is the Holy Spirit doing in believers today? Next week, what is the Holy Spirit doing in the church today? And we're going to answer those

questions not from the Trinity Broadcasting Network's perspective, but from the perspective of the written word of God. That is the only reliable source, that is the only trustworthy place where we can find an answer to these questions.

Now we understand that this is a controversial subject, but controversy is all the more reason to enter in led by the Spirit of God, through the word of God, in order to get clarity to what the true answers are. We cannot sidestep discussions simply because someone might get offended by them. You can't sidestep the word of God in order to make things as broad as possible to keep your congregation as large as possible. That's not why you preach. That's not what the duty of the church is. The duty of the church is to hold forth the truth of the word of God with as much clarity and accuracy as possible and let the Spirit of God work out what the consequences of those teachings might be.

Now, I promise you that we will squarely address the question of the place of miracles and prophesies and tongues in a few weeks. In a few weeks, but I don't want to start there and here's why: because the accusation that is often made against Bible teachers who hold to a biblical view of the work of the Spirit in the church today, I emphasize the biblical view of the work of the Spirit today, the accusation that is made if you don't go along with every wild claim to tongues, prophesies and miracles, if you don't just immediately buy into that, a twofold accusation is made, one is that you're blaspheming the Spirit by even questioning what happens on the platform in a large arena in a stage-controlled environment, if you question that, you're questioning the Holy Spirit, that's one thing; the second thing that I want to clear up on the front end here for us in this room for our church is that the accusation is made is that you don't even believe in the Holy Spirit, you don't believe in the work of the Spirit of God because you don't go along with all of the signs and wonders that the rest of us are claiming is the mark of the work of the Spirit. So that's a straw man, that is a red herring, that is a false accusation. I go back to what I said earlier: we at Truth Community Church, I as the pastor of this church, I as a Christian, believe in a great full work of the Holy Spirit that Scripture teaches and I want to lay that out for you today but it's contrary to the prevailing spirit of what is in the professing evangelical church today. By being fascinated with external wonders, the church has lost sight in many many quarters, the church has lost sight of the true miracle of the true greatness of the true work of the Spirit of God inside a man, in the inner man according as he works through the word of God converting sinners and sanctifying saints. So do we believe in the work of the Spirit? Yes. Let's define that by the word of God.

So what we're going to do today is we're going to start with the basics of the true work of the Spirit in the believer's salvation. The true work of the Holy Spirit in a believer's salvation here today and we have to start from this premise, we have to remember something really vital and critical and that is this, that Scripture describes all men as being dead in their trespasses and sins; describes all men as not seeking God, not desiring God; of being a spiritual corpse, and that's something that we've talked about often from this pulpit. The question in light of that fundamental reality of the nature of every man, woman and child that has been born into the world since the fall of Adam and Eve, the question is this: how is it that anybody becomes spiritually alive? How is it that anybody becomes alive to God if they are dead in sin? If they do not have the capacity to move

toward God to save their own souls, how is it, then, that anybody is saved, how is it that anybody has any spiritual life or any understanding when Romans says there are none who understand, Romans 3? How does that happen? You see the problem. Do you see that there is this vast gulf between the condition of man on the one hand, and then on the other hand, the fact that we are here gathered together as believers who have been born again, who are alive to God, who can understand the word of God? There's a gap here between what all men are and what we find ourselves to be as Christians here today. How does that happen? Well, it's not because we studied harder. It's not because we were intrinsically more inclined toward spiritual things, what bridged the gap between our deadness in sin and being alive to Christ, Ephesians 2, is the Holy Spirit, is the work of the Holy Spirit, and we're going to start this discussion of the Holy Spirit and the believer today by looking at, first, his work of regeneration. His work of regeneration. Regeneration. All men are dead in sin, how do they become alive to God? The answer is that the Holy Spirit does a powerful work of regeneration. The Holy Spirit does a powerful work of regeneration.

Now let me just pause before I go any further and say something that maybe is worth saying. If you study Scripture and want to develop a mature understanding of the doctrine of this great book, you have to be willing to embrace some theological terms that you may not immediately be familiar with that have multiple syllables in them. You know, we can't grow as believers in Christ unless we're willing to dig in. You know, no one masters a profession, no one masters the medical profession or the dental profession or the business world without coming to grips with the technical terms that guide the practice of those professions, and yet somehow the thought seems to be among many, that we should avoid key words, that we should avoid theological terms and just talk in generalities. That's nonsense. If you continually just only drink milk, you are not going to grow into meat. The body needs meat to be nourished and sometimes that meat is expressed in Scripture in doctrines and in terms that are not immediately familiar to those that are outside the church and so we don't shy away, we don't shy away from terms like regeneration and justification and sanctification and glorification and inerrancy and things like that because those kinds of terms define truth for us; they carry with them definitions that give us clarity of mind in order to know the truth and to distinguish falsehood from what is real, what is true, what is according to the word of God, and regeneration is one of those words.

What does regeneration mean? Let me give you a definition that we've given in the past in the years gone by. Regeneration and I'm going to give you a definition and then we'll go through some Scripture text together, okay? Regeneration is a secret act of the Holy Spirit. Regeneration is a secret act of the Holy Spirit in which he imparts divine life to a sinner. Regeneration is a secret act of the Holy Spirit in which he imparts divine life to a sinner so that the sinner will repent of sin, believe in Christ, and serve him in newness of life. Regeneration is a secret act of the Holy Spirit in which he imparts divine life to a sinner so that the sinner will repent of sin, believe in Christ, and serve him in newness of life.

Beloved, that is the great work of the Holy Spirit in the age in which we live. He does many many great things that we are going to describe but apart from the Spirit's work of regeneration, every one of us would still be dead in sin and condemned by God. It is because the Holy Spirit comes with power through the word of God to the heart of man that anyone believes. No one believes on his own power. No one comes to God on their own. It takes a work of the Spirit of God inside the soul, inside the heart of a man to give him understanding, to awaken him to sin, and to reveal to him the glory of Christ and the power of Christ to save him and deliver him from his iniquities. This act of regeneration, this work of regeneration is necessary. No one is saved apart from it because the natural man does not have the capacity to respond to the Gospel of faith; he does not have the power to come to Christ on his own apart from the help and assistance of the Spirit of God.

With that little bit of introduction, turn to the Gospel of John 3 with me. You'll remember this famous story as one of the great teachers in Israel interacted with Jesus. Chapter 3, verse 1, "there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, 'Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.'" So he's kind of flattering Jesus. He recognizes something about Jesus and he is a leading teacher in Israel, as you'll see later on. But Jesus doesn't buy into the flattery. Jesus immediately confronts him with something that the man did not see coming. Jesus said to him in John 3:3, look at it with me, "Jesus answered and said to him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.'" It is an impossibility for a man to enter into heaven, it is impossible for a man to be saved unless he is born again. Verse 4, Nicodemus immediately recognized that his worldview had just been attacked, had just been blown apart, and he did not understand. "Nicodemus said to Him, 'How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?'" He's saying, "What is this new birth of which you speak?" And Jesus said to him in verse 5, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Water is a symbol of the cleansing from sin. The Spirit is a reference to the Holy Spirit. Unless the Holy Spirit does a work in your heart and you are born again, you cannot enter the kingdom of God. You are excluded. You are outside looking in.

Now, the one thing that this does among many others, I suppose, the one thing that this does is that this crushes the pride of man. This humbles man completely, to be told that you cannot go to heaven on your own merit; that you require a work of God from outside you upon you that you have no control over, you must be born again.

Verse 6, Jesus says, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'" Verse 8, "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit." You can see the effects of the wind as the leaves of the tree rustle but you can't see the wind, you can't see its operation, you only see the fruit of it. It is invisible to the human eye. In like manner, Jesus says, so is the work of the Spirit that brings a man to new birth. It is a work

that is done by his power. You cannot control it. You cannot force it to happen. The wind blows where it wishes and that's what the Spirit does with the saving Gospel of Christ as he applies it to hearts when and where and to whom it pleases him.

Look at it again there in verse 8, "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so," in like manner, "is everyone who is born of the Spirit." You must be born again and one of the primary works of the Holy Spirit in the believer in this age, that what the primary work of the Holy Spirit among men today is this work of regeneration, taking the word of God, applying it with power to the heart to humble a sinner that he might flee to Christ for salvation, and that is a work that only the Holy Spirit can do. We don't have the power to do that on our own. So the question is do you believe in the work of the Holy Spirit? Beloved, listen, absolutely I believe in the Holy Spirit or I wouldn't do what I do. I would close the Bible and go home because I don't have the power to reach into any one of your hearts and change you. I don't have the power to impart to you new life. I don't have the power to humble your pride. I don't have the power to assault your love of sin. I don't have the power to cause you to believe. That is totally outside the human realm but it is fully within the work and power of the Holy Spirit and that is one of his primary works today.

Look over at the book of Titus toward the end of your New Testament, prior to the book of Hebrews. In Titus 3, just to review the utter lostness of man, we'll start in verse 3. You know, you don't have to read Scripture too deeply to see these things. You don't have to read Scripture too deeply to realize that it makes a frontal assault on the condition of man and humbles us. In Titus 3:3, you see this. The Apostle Paul says, "we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another." Paul says, "We were enslaved to a dark manner of life." To be a slave is to have a master over you. To be enslaved to sin, to be enslaved to your lust is to say that you are not free; that these things own you; that they dominate you; that they direct the course of your life, and sometimes that's expressed in great dark behavior in drunkenness and gross immorality and things like that. Beloved, I should tell you at the same time, remind you of things that we've said in the past, that that enslaving desire for sin, that enslaving rebellion toward God is often also expressed in utter spiritual indifference and you just say, "Whatever. That's your truth. That's fine. It's not my truth. I'm going to go on." You understand that even if that person is outwardly "moral," with the air quotes around it for the benefit of the transcript later on, even if you're outwardly "moral," that that kind of indifference is a blatant act of rebellion against the truth and revelation of God. How can you be indifferent to the fact that God, the Creator, has spoken; God, the Judge, has spoken; the holiness of God has been revealed in the heavens and in the word, how can you be indifferent to that? That indifference, that passive resistance, that complete lack of openness to what the word of God says is just a mark of spiritual slavery as anything else. So don't deceive yourself, don't think just because I'm outwardly moral I must be okay. That's not true. The question is are you alive to Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit or not.

Paul says in verse 3 we were foolish, enslaved and on it goes but look at what he says in verse 4. Into that darkness, into that spiritual nightmare that is the existence of all humanity, Paul writing to believers, writing to Titus for the benefit of the church at Crete, he says in verse 4, "But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared," what did he do, "He saved us." He saved us. He delivered us from that spiritual slavery. He redeemed us from that spiritual slavery. He bought us out of the slave market and brought us into a new place. Where there was darkness in your mind and soul, now light appeared.

How did that happen? It must have been something you did, right? No, verse 5, "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness." Paul just delivers a crushing blow to the idea of human merit. He says if you are in Christ, it's not because of anything that you did to deserve it. There is no righteousness in you to prompt a response from God, as if God needed some kind of futile, feeble, moral effort from you and that somehow gave something to him that obligated him to give something back to you. It doesn't work that way. That is not the economy of the kingdom of God at all. It's not, look at 5 with me again, it is "not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness."

Well, how was it, then, that he saved us? How was it that this gift came with power to our souls? Look at it here, "but according to His mercy," according to that kind compassion of God to you in your need. There you were in spiritual darkness, there you were in spiritual slavery, and God had mercy on you. And by what means did he deliver that great gift of salvation to you? "By the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit." The washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, in other words, the Holy Spirit came upon you, washed your filthy soul, renewed your dirty mind, and imparted new life to you. This was an act of spiritual power that belongs only to God. No man has the power to do that for you. There is no priest that can awaken your soul to sin. By the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit did this work of regeneration.

Jesus said it's like the wind. He says you don't know where it comes from, you don't know where it's going. There is a certain element of mystery to how this happens in each individual heart but we know enough to declare and to understand what it is that the Spirit does. When you come under the sound of the word of God, the Holy Spirit attends the word, blesses the word, sends it forth to your mind and heart with power to open up what previously had been closed, to open up your mind so that you can understand and not only understand but he breaks that dominant power of sin in your heart and imparts new life to you so that you could go forth and willingly respond to Christ in repentance and faith. The Spirit of God, metaphorically speaking, went and took those massive chains that were around your heart, the massive chains around your mind, the massive lock that kept your soul from exiting and going to the kingdom of God, the Spirit of God broke that through the power of the word of God and enabled you and put you in a position where now you were able to repent and believe. Apart from that work of the Spirit of God, no one is saved at all. 1 John 4:19 says, "We love, because He first loved us."

Men lack spiritual power to reach out to God. Charles Spurgeon said this, and I quote. It's a little bit of a long quote so stay with me. Speaking of this regenerating work of the Holy Spirit he says, "The Gospel says, 'Repent.' But the unregenerate man loves his sins and will not repent of them. He presses them to his bosom and until his nature is changed, he will never look upon those sins with abhorrence and sorrow. The Gospel says, 'Believe; cast away all confidence in your own merits and believe in Jesus.' But the carnal mind is proud and it says, 'Why should I believe and be saved by the works of another? I want to do something myself that I may have some of the credit for it, either by good prayers, or good works of some kind.'" Continuing the quote just a little bit longer, Charles Spurgeon says this, "Brethren, we must be born again because the truth of the Gospel cannot be understood and the commands of the Gospel cannot be obeyed except where the Spirit of God works regeneration in the heart!" That's the work of regeneration that the Spirit of God does. He imparts new life to sinners. According to the will of the Spirit, according to the will of God, according to the plan of God, the Spirit of God imparts new life into dead hearts and spiritual change is produced as a result, and he does that in connection with the word of God. The Spirit of God takes the word of God and applies it to the soul with power in a way that produces salvation. In Romans 1, Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes."

So the Spirit does this work of regeneration in the believer today. Secondly, I want to talk about the Spirit's work of indwelling. The Spirit's work of indwelling. What else does the Holy Spirit do? Here's one of the blessed things about the nature of the work of God in salvation is that he comes to us with power through the word but he doesn't then just abandon us to leave us to sort it out on our own. The Spirit of God comes and indwells every true believer permanently as their guide, as their resident presence of God in a way that results in various spiritual changes that we'll look at in a moment.

First of all, let's just see this work of indwelling stated as it is attributed to the Holy Spirit. In Romans 8, look at it with me, Romans 8. Scripture describes the Holy Spirit as indwelling every believer and in chapter 8, verse 9 of Romans, the Apostle Paul says, "you are not in the flesh," you're not in that human realm of rebellion against God, "but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him." So there are two classes, there are those who are not Christians who do not have the Spirit of God, and there are Christians who do have the Spirit of God and the Spirit dwells within them. The Spirit indwells every true believer. 1 Corinthians 3:16 says, "Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" Talking to true Christians there. In 1 Corinthians 12:13 it says, "by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit." So the Spirit of God does this remarkably personal work in the heart of every true Christian. The Spirit of God comes and indwells them. The Spirit of God comes and somehow inhabits them in a way that makes him a permanent part of their lives. He abides with us. He guides us in the truth.

In 1 John 4, I know we're kind of bouncing around to a few different texts here, in 1 John 4:2, you see the mark of the Spirit of God. 1 John 4:2, it says, "By this you know the

Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist." Then in verse 4, "You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in," that is, greater is the Spirit of God who is in you, "than he who is in the world."

So we have this abiding indwelling of the Holy Spirit. What is he doing that for? Well, what the Spirit of God is doing is he is mediating, he is the instrument of communicating the presence of Christ to your life. He abides with you so that Christ, as Jesus said in Matthew 28, he said, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age." The Spirit of God abides in us and thereby we are abiding in the presence of Christ through the work and power and ministry of the Holy Spirit. Scripture describes believers as being in union with Jesus Christ; that we are in him and the Spirit is the one who mediates that to us in a way that cannot be broken, in a way that guarantees that your salvation once it is really received, cannot be lost. The Spirit of God doesn't come and go and save you and then cast you aside as if God were changeable in response to your behavior. No, the purpose of God was to save you before the beginning of time. Before time began, he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. Now in time, the Spirit of God makes that a reality, a great invisible work that no man can do.

So you ask me do I believe in the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer today? Absolutely I do. Wouldn't be a believer without the Holy Spirit, and every true believer has the living Holy Spirit abiding in him, indwelling him from the moment of his conversion all the way to the end. Beloved, there is no man that can do that. Mary can't do that for you. There is no priest that can do that. Joseph Smith can't do that. Mary Baker Eddy can't do that. Today's so-called prophets can't do that. This is a work that only the Spirit of God can do and he does do it for every true believer.

Now look, how is it – I don't want to get five weeks ahead of my series here so let me just say this broadly, generally and we'll come back to it in the future. These are great, truly great realities of which Scripture speaks. These are the great realities that make it so that a man does not go to hell for eternity but rather dwells in heaven with Christ for eternity. These are the great realities that produce real conversion, real new life in the hearts of men who previously were hostile to God. Some of you can remember, you were actively hostile to God. I was. The way I used the name of Christ in my pre-converted days is appalling and I was hostile to that name. Beloved, no man changed that. No man changed it in you either. The reason that you have a new disposition toward God and to his word is because the Spirit of God worked on your heart.

Now, what we must do as believers in Christ especially in this age, is have a high and great appreciation for the eternal magnitude of that kind of work by the Holy Spirit so that we recognize it is an elevated lofty work beyond comparison to anything else, and when you have that rooted in your mind, then you're not attracted to the cheap imitations that are done under stage lights and in controlled environments claiming to be works of the Holy Spirit. You realize that these things are just external, that they are passing, that they are not even real, and because you know the true and because you value the true,

you're not attracted to the counterfeit. You realize that Scripture speaks of a work inside the man by the word rather than outside the word in wonders. I promise you we're going to cover that in great detail in the weeks to come. For now we just want to see that for us, for you and me as fellow believers in Christ, for us to have the power of sin that used to dominate us broken in our hearts, to have a new power that is attracted to righteousness that can understand the word of God, that loves the people of God, to have a mind that can read the word of God with understanding, when that's real in your mind, when that's real in your heart, when you've truly been born again by the Spirit, that is the most precious possession in your life. That roots your affections on matters of the word applied to the inner man and we must appreciate this work that the Holy Spirit really does.

Now, an aspect, you could say, of that indwelling, turn to Ephesians. Scripture describes a couple of aspects of that indwelling work, you could say a couple of consequences of that indwelling work of the Holy Spirit. In Ephesians 1, again seeing what is attributed to the Holy Spirit, in Ephesians 1:13 and 14 it says this, and here again you see the work of the Spirit in the heart of men in conjunction with the word of God. Verse 13, "In Him," meaning in Christ, "you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation--having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory."

Scripture says you were sealed in Christ with the Holy Spirit. What does that mean? In ancient times, ancient documents were sealed with wax to close them, to protect them, and to certify that they came from the owner. So they were sealed in a way that protected the contents and verified them as being from the owner. What Scripture describes in this sealing aspect of the Holy Spirit is this, when the Spirit of God came upon you, he stamped you as belonging to God. He marked you out to show that you belonged to him. There was a unique mark from God placed on you, not in the physical realm but in the spiritual realm that showed that you were really from God, that your salvation was real. The owner's distinct seal guaranteed the authenticity of the document.

So what is the mark of the Spirit of God in a life today? Does Scripture tell us to look for outward manifestations of signs, that that's the fruit of the Spirit? Galatians 5:22 and 23, the fruit of the Spirit, inner realities that manifest themselves in life: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, self-control. I dropped one of them along the way. Galatians 5:22 and 23, those fruit being the mark, the overflow, the impress, the action that the Spirit does on the lives of those that he saves. That is the seal. That is the mark. Those of you that were converted in your adult life like I was, didn't you see a change from the former person you were to what you became? Before you were angry and enslaved to lusts and somehow it dawned on you that you had been born again. When you put your faith in Christ, you started to see fruit from your life that had never been there before. It's certainly true of me. Everything changed. That foul profane mouth of mine was gone. The angry hateful person that I had been was gone replaced by this inner sense of tranquility and peace that I had never known before. I wasn't trying to make that happen. It was just real. And in your testimony, my Christian friend, you should be able to look back and see something, "I once was lost but now I'm found. I was blind but now

I see." What is the hinge on which that change took place? It was the work of the Spirit of God. It was the Spirit of God sealing you, marking you out as your own, and having that manifest in inner changes in your heart that came out in life. That's the work of the Holy Spirit. No man does that.

So we love the Holy Spirit. We love the work of the Spirit. We believe in the work of the Spirit of God. We are looking to Scripture to let Scripture tell us what that looks like because Scripture is the authority, not the claims of a guy with poofy hair on a TV set who says, "God spoke to me"; not from a woman who says that God meets her at 4 o'clock in the morning because he's got to have some fellowship with her. That's not it. That's not it. You see, we're talking about fundamental matters of how do we know what is true. Where is truth found? Not in the claims of the 21st century false prophets, in the claims of the first century writings of the appointed apostles of Jesus Christ. We go to the word of God and we find out what is true and this is what God attributes as the work of the Spirit in this age.

Now one more thing about this aspect of the indwelling of the Spirit, the Spirit is a pledge to us as well. A pledge. Look at 2 Corinthians 1:21. Again, notice the inner work. 2 Corinthians 1:21, "Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us," there is that word, "and gave us the Spirit in our hearts," in the inner man, "as a pledge." As a pledge. Chapter 5, verse 5 of 2 Corinthians, "Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge." The Spirit is a pledge in the sense that he is a down payment from God. What does a down payment do on a mortgage? A down payment is a promise that there is more to come. It is a guarantee that there will be more that is delivered later. God gives us the Holy Spirit in this life and the presence of the Holy Spirit is the indication of a promise from God that he will complete what he has begun; that there is more to come; that as the Holy Spirit has started a work, there will be a greater fulfillment in the end; a pledge, a promise that cannot be broken from God that says, "I have more in store for you."

When a young man gives a young woman an engagement ring, what is it except that there is a promise of more to come? There will be a fulfillment, there will be a consummation of our relationship and this ring is a symbol of my promise that that will come. And in the wedding, another symbol of a ring is given and I'm going to keep these promises that we are now consummating. A symbol, a vow that this will take place. And sometimes men and women don't do a great job on those, do they? But God keeps his promises. When God makes a pledge, you can know for certain that the fulfillment will take place; that there will be a consummation. So the fact that we have the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, that we can recognize by the spiritual fruit that he produces in our lives, when there is an ongoing abiding change that takes place in a life, you are recognizing the pledge from God to that person, this is really glorious, the pledge from God to that person that what I've started, I'm going to finish. As good as the foretaste is now, as good as this preliminary feast is, there is a consummating feast that is yet to come for you, my beloved, speaking in those terms. The promise from God that he will fulfill what he has started, the Spirit is God's pledge to that.

Notice the pledge that he gave. Notice it. Notice it. The pledge not in external signs that can be manipulated and changed, but a pledge of God himself. God gives the Spirit himself as the pledge that he will do what he says and he has done that for you, beloved fellow Christian, beloved brother in Christ, beloved sister in Christ. Think with me, what have we been saying? What does Scripture say about the reality of who you were? Enslaved to various lusts. Dead in trespasses and sins. Not understanding. No one who does good, not even one, and here you are abiding, walking through life now as a true Christian with the Spirit abiding in you, indwelling you as a pledge from God that he has got even better things in store for you. That promotes praise from the believing heart. That gives us spiritual confidence that overcomes, that allows us to persevere through the severe adversities of life.

Beloved, these are the truths. Oh, I hope you anchor them in. I hope you go back and listen to these things again because this is where it is at. These are the things that anchor you even as you are approaching death because even as your outer man is decaying, you lay hold of the pledge of the Spirit, you lay hold of the work of God, you lay hold of what he's done and realize that it's a promise that what he has started he will finish. And unlike so many who approach death with fear, the pledge of the Spirit is your ability to be able to look forward and to walk through that with a sense of serenity that what my God has started, he will finish. I will be safe on the other side because he pledged it and the pledge that he gave was of himself.

Well, finally, let's quickly look at a final work of the Spirit in the life of the believer today, it's the work of sanctification. The work of sanctification. Now, there are two aspects to sanctification which is sometimes missed. The first aspect is what theologians call definitive sanctification or positional sanctification, and what they mean when theologians talk this way, what they mean by this is that Christians, true Christians have been set apart by the Spirit for Christ. To sanctify means to set apart and when the Spirit of God worked in your heart and you were saved, beloved, he did this: he set you apart; he took you out from the clump of humanity, of sinful humanity, and placed you in the body of Christ. He set you apart so that you were to belong to Christ henceforth and forevermore and sin was no longer your master, sin is no longer your master. The reason that we can grow in grace is because the power of sin has been broken. Sin is no longer the master, Christ is. You've been set apart. You've been sanctified in that way.

The Holy Spirit also does a work of progressive sanctification. Progressive sanctification. Louis Berkhof defines it this way, the Reformed theologian, he says progressive sanctification is this: it is that gracious and continuous operation of the Holy Spirit by which he purifies the sinner, renews his whole nature in the image of God, and enables him to perform good works. The Spirit purifies us. The Spirit renews our nature after the image of God. The Spirit gives us the power to perform good works.

People who find themselves just completely and utterly unable to break the power of sin should realize that's a mark of the absence of the Spirit of God in their lives. I realize you may have prayed a prayer, walked an aisle in the past; I realize some have memories of their mama praying by their bedside when they were three or four, supposedly giving

your heart to Jesus, but 20, 30 years later, there is nothing in that life that shows that they really love Christ. It's a life given over to sin, a life given over to darkness, a life with no love for the things of God, no love for his people. That is the mark of the absence of the Spirit of God because one of the things that the Spirit of God does is he moves us in the direction of holiness. You say, "But what about that time with my mama?" Well, lots of things happened on a superficial level that don't result in anything that really changed. "But I prayed with my mama!" To which I reply, "But where is the Spirit of God in your life? Where is the mark of that? Show me your faith by your works. Show me your faith by the fruit of the Spirit in your life." You say, "But if what you're saying is true, then that time with my mama, I wasn't really saved." Yeah, that's exactly what we're saying because the presence of the Spirit of God is shown by the fruit that he produces in a life, and the Spirit does the sanctifying work in the hearts of everyone that is saved. The absence of that should cause you to go back to the drawing board and reassess all of life and go to God with a humble prayer that says, "God, have I missed it completely? Have mercy on my sin-darkened soul! Have mercy on me in Christ. Maybe I was never saved, God. Help me now because this is too urgent to miss."

Look at Romans 8:11, "if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you," there is that indwelling work again, what inevitably happens? "He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you." There will be a mark of the life of the Spirit of God who dwells in every true Christian, remember, there will be a mark that shows the signs of spiritual life not spiritual death. We're not saying that true believers can't struggle with besetting sins, of course they do. We're talking about something different. Where is your love for the word of God? Where is your love for Christ? Where is your passion for knowing him? Where is your hope as you look to eternity? Where is the mark that something other than the things of this earth are the most important thing in your life? Where is that shown in your life somehow, someplace, because the Spirit gives that kind of life to everyone that he indwells.

Verse 12, "So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh," frightening words here, "for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." You could say that those who are being led by the Spirit of God and they and they alone are the sons of God.

One final verse, you don't need to turn there, from Galatians 5:16 as we describe this work of sanctification. Paul says, "walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh."

So what have we seen here today, beloved? What is the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer today? Regeneration. Indwelling. Sanctification. Works that no man can do. Works which are known by the fruit that they produce in the heart of the one who believes. This is the work of the Holy Spirit, work that it's not too much to say. You see this, right? You see this from the word of God. This is what the reality of the work of the

Spirit of God is and so many times, those who claim to have the Spirit by signs and wonders are notorious for their worldly ungodly dispositions, behavior and lifestyle.

So go to the word and see the work of the Spirit and have discernment. Go to the word, see the work of the Spirit and ask whether you see something of that being manifested in your life. And if you do and you find the presence of the Spirit of God operating, know that God has saved you in the Lord Jesus Christ, that God has given the Spirit to you as a pledge that he's going to do far greater things for you even in the future. You will gather around that table, you will have a seat reserved for you at the supper, the marriage supper of the Lamb, and you will be there and you will belong there and that will be more like home to you than anything you ever experienced on earth. So we thank the Holy Spirit, we yield to the Holy Spirit, we ask the Holy Spirit for help, and we look forward to the weeks ahead as we study these things in greater depth.

Bow with me in prayer.

Great Father, great Son, great Holy Spirit, thank you for the work of the Spirit of God in the believer today. Thank you that you imparted new life to us. Thank you that the Spirit indwells us. Thank you that we have him as a pledge. Thank you for his sanctifying work. O Spirit of God, have free reign in the hearts here today. In the unbelieving hearts, Father, we ask that he would blow like a wind upon their hearts to bring them to faith in Christ, to turn from sin to believe in Christ, to receive him by faith in order that they might be saved. For those of us that have been saved, O God, and we see the fruit of the Spirit even as we mourn our own sin in the middle of it, we thank you for that. We acknowledge that we did not deserve the great gifts that you have given to us in Christ but we thank you for them. We bless your name for them and we realize that in the totality of the work of the Spirit, what all of life has come to mean, what the purpose of all of our existence now is in light of this unsearchable and unfathomable riches that you have given to us in Christ, that our hearts would dissolve, as it were, before your throne with a singular surpassing desire for the glory of God alone, for our God, from you and through you and to you are all things. To you, to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the great Triune God, to you be the glory forever. Amen.

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