



LIFE *in the* SPIRIT

The Spirit of Adoption | The Spirit and Salvation

Lesson 5

Imagine a young child watches his team win the Superbowl after an incredible comeback. A couple of late calls are made that seemed questionable against his team, a team that was already supposed to lose by a lot. The next day several adults are talking about the game – how things played out, whether or not they should have the option to challenge calls, timeout management at the end of the game, and in the middle of this conversation the young boy says, “My team won!” That’s true, but that’s barely scratching the surface of what he saw. Over time, that little boy will come to understand much more of what he watched as a small child. If he watches a recording of the game ten years later, he will likely understand football much better and see much he missed as a kid. Finally, let’s say this boy grows up and becomes a quarterback and then a coach in the NFL. He watches the Super bowl again as he nears retirement, and now he personally knows what it’s like to play in and coach at the professional level. Now he sees the game in an even deeper way. It’s the same game he saw as a child, but he’s come to understand a lot more about that event.

When it comes to studying our salvation, sometimes we feel like that boy. When we get saved, most of us probably had a very basic grasp of what salvation is – I’m a sinner; Jesus died and rose to save me; and by believing in Him I can have eternal life. But as we grow in our faith, we come to learn a whole lot more about what that means. We learn about concepts like justification, redemption, propitiation, adoption, vicarious substitution, and more. In this lesson, we are going to learn a lot about the role the Spirit has in our salvation, and that might be new information for some people. Some might be a little unsettled by this. Does salvation still work if you didn’t know everything we are studying in this lesson? Yes! What happened when you trusted Christ was far deeper than you realized at the time, and for more significant than any of us can fully understand. But there is great value that comes from taking time to learn more about how God’s salvation of our souls works.

What benefit comes from learning more about what goes into our salvation?

We saw in our last lesson the effect that the coming of the Spirit had on the disciples and those who trusted Jesus. But while there was a big shift that happened at that moment, that’s a little different from when someone accepts Christ for the first time today and receives the Spirit. Many of the disciples had already believed in Jesus, but they awaited the coming of the Spirit. Now that the Spirit has come, there is no delay between when we trust Christ and when the Spirit comes. In this lesson we will see the Spirit’s

work in bringing conviction, His work in producing the new birth, and the way in which He brings us into God's family.

The Spirit and Conviction

First, it's important to realize that the Spirit has a part to play in bringing people to the point where they realize their need for salvation in the first place. Christians frequently talk about the Holy Spirit convicting them of sin. Surprisingly, there is only one verse in Scripture that explicitly talks about the Spirit's role of conviction, and that role isn't focused on believers. Instead, John 16:8-11 makes it clear that one of the roles of the Holy Spirit is to convict (KJV reprove) the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment. This threefold conviction is then explained in the following verses as reproving them and bring them shame for their sin because they have not believed in Christ, although Christ was proved to be true by ascending into heaven and although their leader had already been condemned.

To put it simply, people get saved because they realize they are sinners. They realize they are sinners because the Holy Spirit brings a sense of guilt and through the ministry of the Word and Spirit-empowered believers shows sinners that they are in trouble. In *Pilgrim's Progress*, the main character Christian realizes at the beginning of the book that he is carrying a massive load of sin. Everyone had a load of sin, but only Christian seemed to notice it. The weight from this burden seems heavier and heavier until he eventually he discovers how by believing the gospel the load can be removed. Ever wondered why it is that some people seem unbothered by their sin and others are keenly aware of and guilty over their sin? According to Scripture, the answer is that God's Spirit brings conviction.

How do you think the Spirit brings conviction?

What are some reasons that people ignore the conviction of the Spirit, and what happens if they continue to reject Him?

The Spirit and the New Birth

When we think of salvation, we normally focus on the work that Jesus did for us by paying our sin debt on the cross. Sometimes we focus on the role of the Father in election or in planning our salvation. But the Holy Spirit also plays a critical role in our salvation by giving us spiritual cleansing and new life.

The Spirit Washes Us of Our Sins (Regeneration)

Jesus's conversation with Nicodemus in John 3 is fascinating for many reasons. In this account a Jewish craftsman discusses spiritual realities with one of the most elite teachers in Israel about and the elite teacher can't keep up. In the midst of this discussion, Jesus tells Nicodemus that "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Although some think that the reference to "water" is a reference to some form of baptism, it's more likely that what

is being discussed here is the cleansing that comes through the work of the Spirit.¹ In theology the teaching that we must be born a second time is referred to as “regeneration.” When we get saved, the Spirit cleanses us through something we call the new birth.

Paul also closely connects the work of the Spirit in salvation with spiritual cleansing. In 1 Corinthians 6:11 he teaches that we have been washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord and by the Spirit. Later on in Titus 3:5 He will also connects the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit. When we get saved, we become new creatures (cf 2 Corinthians 5:17), and according to Scripture the one who makes us new creatures is the Holy Spirit.

What does it mean that we are new creatures? What does this mean and what does this not mean?

The Spirit Brings New Life (Resurrection)

Throughout the New Testament it becomes clear that true life can only come from God, and that following our own way leads to death. This is why in Romans 8 Paul makes clear that those who live by their sinful flesh will die, but those who live by the Spirit will have life (Romans 8:11-13). This passage teaches that one day the Spirit will bring new life to our mortal bodies (8:11). What Paul means by this is that our salvation involves much more than just the forgiveness of our sin. One day it will include the redemption of our bodies when we are either resurrected or raptured. Yet there is a sense in which even now, before we are given glorified bodies, we are given new life by the Spirit (8:12-13). Ultimately, our sin will bring death and God’s Spirit will bring resurrected life. But we can have a taste of what that is like now by choosing the Spirit and finding life in obedience.

In what ways does sin lead to death?

How does Spirit-empowered obedience lead to life?

The Spirit Comes to Live in Us (Indwelling and Earnest)

Once we put our faith in Christ and are born again, the Spirit comes to dwell in us. This is the promise that Peter made at Pentecost (Acts 2:37-38), and it is clearly taught in Scripture (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Part of the purpose for this indwelling is to be an “earnest” or a “guarantee” of our salvation (Ephesians 1:14). When you go to purchase a house, normally the sellers are going to want earnest money. This money will normally end up being just a small portion of what you will end up paying, but if you decide you don’t want to buy the house and don’t have a good reason, you lose the money. An earnest shows that you are serious (i.e., in earnest) about buying their house. What does this have to do with Christianity? God has made some impressive promises in the gospel. To prove He was serious when making such grand promises, God gave us a downpayment, a real blessing that guarantees the other blessings that are to come. That

¹ The problem with taking this as a reference to Christian baptism is that the command to baptize in Jesus’s name comes after the resurrection, so how could Jesus be disappointed that Nicodemus didn’t understand (John 3:9-10)? Similarly, some have tried to see a reference to John’s baptism, but there is no clear Old Testament teaching on the baptism of John. So once again, why would Jesus be frustrated with Nicodemus for not understanding something that wasn’t in the Old Testament. The connection between the Spirit and spiritual cleansing was, however, taught in the Old Testament (Ezekiel 36:25-27).

downpayment is the Holy Spirit, the one who comes to dwell in us and whose presence shows that God is serious about what He has promised us.

What are some of the other things that God has promised us that have yet to happen?

Why do we sometimes ignore or think lightly of God's blessing of the Holy Spirit as a downpayment?

The Spirit and God's Family

One we are born again we are brought into a new family. This brings us into a new relationship with God as well as with other Christians. In the New Testament, this concept is communicated through the words "adoption" as well as "baptism." We will take a brief moment and look at each of these terms.

The Spirit Makes Us Part of God's Family (Adoption)

Paul uses an interesting description of the Holy Spirit in Romans 8:14-17. Here the Spirit is called "the Spirit of adoption," by whom we cry out "Abba, Father!" Paul says that if you are led of the Spirit, this means you are God's child, and that God's Spirit testifies, or bears witness, with our spirit that we are God's children. In other words, the Holy Spirit assures us that we really are God's children, especially as we go through suffering.

Of course, being a part of God's family is an objective reality, not a subjective feeling. If a man has a son and the son decides that he doesn't feel like a member of the family, that doesn't make him any less a part of the family. But the son may feel as if he isn't *really* a part of his family, or that he doesn't have the right to ask his father for anything. The Holy Spirit, then, comes into our lives and assures our hearts that we really are God's children, and that we can go to God as a Father because we are coheirs with Christ.

What kinds of things might cause us to doubt our sonship – the fact that we are God's children?

How should a person respond if they don't feel like they are part of God's family? Does this mean he or she is not saved?

The Spirit Unites Us to Christ and the Church (Baptism)

One aspect of salvation that is confusing to many people is the whole concept of being "baptized" by the Spirit. This is different than the physical water baptism where someone gets dunked when they get saved, but instead refers to the fact that the Holy Spirit comes upon all true Christians. Some groups will argue that baptism in the Spirit comes after salvation and that until you have spoken in tongues, you haven't *really* been baptized by the Spirit. But what does the Bible say? In 1 Corinthians 12:13 Paul says, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body."² Paul is writing to a whole church, and He argues that the they have all been baptized by the Spirit. In fact, Paul is arguing for unity in this passage, and one of the

² Some groups try to make a distinction between being baptized *in* the Spirit (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33) and being baptized *by* the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13). The problem with this view is that although English translations make a distinction here, the same Greek preposition is used in both instances (Gk. *en*).

arguments he is using is that we have all been baptized in the Spirit. That argument doesn't work if only some people are Spirit-baptized!

Based on this, how then can a person know that he or she has been baptized in the Spirit?

Why do Christians seem so divided if they have the Holy Spirit to unify them?

Did you know that the Holy Spirit does all of this at the moment of conversion? Most people going through this lesson for the first time were probably not aware of everything taught here, and they were almost certainly not aware of it when it happened to them at the moment of salvation. But as we said at the beginning, you don't have to know everything that is happening to be truly saved. You have to know that you are sinner who needs a Savior, and you have to know and believe that Jesus is that Savior. But looking more deeply into what God has done should amaze us as we recognize God's wisdom, and it should humble us that God has done so much for us in our salvation!