

## The Spirit's Work

12/22/2024

In last week's lesson we briefly looked at the idea of who we are, or more precisely what does the term 'me' involve. Scripture says we are both body (flesh) and spirit. But as Paul explains about himself in his letter to the Romans there is a battle going on within him. That he does not always do what he wants or intends to do. He says the things he does not want to do are the very things he does.

Jesus defines the problem Paul expressed having in the passage above with what he says to Peter in the following account -

Jesus after finding his disciples sleeping in the garden on the night He was betrayed says to Peter - *"Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."* (Matthew 26:41)

Have you ever found yourself saying - Why did I do that I know better!

Our flesh and our Spirit are not always in sync. But this is not the case with God and His Spirit. They are one Scripture informs us. We are also told The Father, Spirit and Jesus are one. And this is what Jesus prayed for his disciples and those who would believe in Him through their message on the night He was betrayed - That they all may be one.

I think we may all have heard the expression 'The Spirit Works in Mysterious Ways'. When we don't know how something works it can be mysterious to us. The Spirit or Holy Spirit is a mystery to many. But need it be so? In last weeks lesson I referenced John 16:8 which tells us some things about Him. Here is that passage in it's context where Jesus is addressing His disciples -

*"All this I have told you so that you will not fall away. They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. I have told you this, so that when their time comes you will remember that I warned you about them. I did not tell you this from the beginning because I was with you, but now I am going to him who sent me. None of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' Rather, you are filled with grief because I have said these things. But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the **Advocate** will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because people do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he*

*will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.”*

Here we are informed about a number of things with regard to The Spirit.

1. The Spirit is a ‘He’ and not a force or thing.
2. He was coming to earth Jesus said.
3. He will guide Jesus’ disciples into all the truth.
4. He will not speak on His own but only what He hears.
5. What the Spirit tells them will come by way of Jesus.
6. Jesus told his disciples The advocate or comforter would tell them what is to come.
7. When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment:

The Spirit is referred to as an **advocate** (some translations use the word ‘comforter’). The Greek word used here is *paraklētōs* pronounced *par-ak'-lay-tos*. It is defined as an advocate, comforter, helper, intercessor, a consoler. This word is used 5 times in The New Testament. Here in John 16:7, as highlighted above, and in -

John 14:16 (John 14:15-17) where Jesus says - *“If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will **give you another advocate** to help you and be with you forever— the Spirit of truth.*

John 14:26 (14:25-26) where Jesus says - *“All this I have spoken while still with you. But the **Advocate**, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*

John 15:26 where Jesus says - *“When the **Advocate** comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me.*

1st John 2:1 (1st John 2:1-2) Here John refers to Jesus as an Advocate (Paraclete or *Parakletos*) - *“My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an **advocate** with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.*

Thus The Spirit gets His direction from The Father in Heaven via Jesus and John 5:19 tells us this about Jesus and where He gets His direction - *“Jesus gave them this answer: “Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.”*

Or as Jesus told his disciples in the following account From John 14:1-14. (Keep in mind this is the conversation Jesus had with his disciples just prior to telling them the Advocate/comforter (Holy Spirit) was coming) -

*“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.” Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.”*

In recent lessons we have looked at responding to God’s message of salvation for mankind. Often referred to as The Gospel Call. When we examine the scriptures we find that mankind needs to hear the message and then respond to it as God commands. Part of that response is to repent and be baptized for the remission of our sins. We are told if we respond this way we will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. In last week’s lesson I emphasized the point that the Holy Spirit is the gift spoken of there in Acts 2:38. Also that the Spirit can reside in us. And the Spirit can provide gifts to us. But as we have seen in the passages presented to us today from Scripture The Spirit gets His direction via Jesus and Jesus gets His direction via The Father in Heaven. Thus they are one! So as Jesus told His disciples - if you have seen me you have seen The Father.

The Hebrew writer makes this point about Jesus and The Father in the opening statement of his letter as follows - *“In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.”*

So if we don’t know Jesus then we don’t know The Father, and if we don’t know the Father then we don’t know The Spirit, and vice versa.

Sadly some who call themselves followers of Christ think The Spirit is some kind of force that takes possession of their body and causes them to do certain things. But

But Scripture clearly tells us what the fruit of the Spirit is, and what having The Spirit in us will produce.

Consider the following concerning what the Angel Gabriel told Zechariah the father of John the Baptist about John - *“Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. But the angel said to him: “Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and **he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born.** He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”* (Luke 1:11-17)

This fulfilled the prophesy at the closing of the book of Malachi.

But also consider this about the one we call John The Baptist -

*“Then Jesus went back across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing in the early days. There he stayed, and many people came to him. They said, **“Though John never performed a sign, all that John said about this man was true.”** And in that place many believed in Jesus.”* (John 10:40-42)

Proof that being filled with The Spirit and telling the truth about Jesus gets the job done. No need for signs and wonders. Just preaching Christ Crucified!

Or as Paul told the Corinthians - *“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written:*

*“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;*

*the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”*

*Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, **but we preach Christ crucified:** a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.*

(1st Corinthians 1:18-26)

Paul in a prayer recorded for us in Ephesian 3:14-21 tells us a number of things about The Spirit -

*“For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may **strengthen you***

*with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, **according to his power that is at work within us**, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”*

Here we see Paul present this information in a manner commonly found in Scripture. He bookcases his main point. In the first statement highlighted above Paul ask God for something. Paul then describes the specifics and God's ability to provide what he has ask for. The second highlighted portion speaks of the answer God has already provided to them and abundantly so. Paul's point in this passage is similar to the one made by the prophet Elisha in 2nd Kings 6:15-17 where it says -

*“When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. “Oh no, my lord! What shall we do?” the servant asked. “Don't be afraid,” the prophet answered. “Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” And Elisha prayed, “Open his eyes, Lord, so that he may see.” Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.”*

The similarity in Paul's prayer with that of Elisha's prayer is that in both cases God has provided the solution, and abundantly so. It is just that we need to see it. To have faith in what God has promised. Faith we are told comes by hearing, hearing the Word of God.

In closing one more from Paul's letter to the Ephesians -

*“Take the helmet of salvation and **the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God**. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, **words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel**, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.”*

May the few passages of Scripture presented in this lesson help us see that God's Word has plenty to say about The Holy Spirit and His work in God's plan of salvation for mankind. And that The Spirit need not be so mysterious to people.