

Essentials for Spiritual Growth

Lesson # 4 -- Growing in Understanding and Cooperating with the Holy Spirit

Introduction

- A. In this series on Spiritual Growth we have considered *Our Greatness and Wretchedness*, *The Assurance of Salvation*, and *Freedom from Sin*. And now we come to a most unusual subject: *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit*.
- B. All of the passages considered in this lesson deserve much more attention than that which is given here. And, there are many more verses and sections of the Bible that should be carefully considered in order to treat this subject with the attention and reverence the Holy Spirit deserves.
- C. Because of the unusual nature of this study, the Holy Spirit Himself, I want to ask you to pray with me before we begin.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for Yourself, for Your wonderful love and provision of such infinite mercy for us in the gift of the Lord Jesus and His redeeming work . We thank You for giving us that mercy in salvation. In particular we want to thank You for the gift of the Blessed Holy Spirit. We are overwhelmed in the realization that You have given us the very One Who inspired the Bible, the One Who supported the Lord Jesus in His earthly life and enabled Him to endure the terrible suffering of the Crucifixion, and the One Who has brought us to Yourself in the New Birth. We know so little about You, about the Lord Jesus, and about the Holy Spirit. We ask You to open the eyes of our understanding. We choose to invite You, the Lord Jesus, and the Blessed Holy Spirit into every area of our life. We invite You, Almighty God, to come, break down every idol, cast out every foe, wash us so we can be whiter than snow. Teach us, fill us with the Holy Spirit, develop His fruit in our life, release His gifts within us, empower us to be a witness for You. Our only desire is to glorify You, Holy Father; to exalt You, Lord Jesus; and to honor You, Blessed Holy Spirit. We need You very much. As we study Your Word, grant to us the wisdom, honesty, openness, hunger, and understanding that we need. We ask this only for Your glory and in the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

I. The Importance of This Subject.

- A. **The primary reason this subject is important is because we are studying about a Person, the Blessed Holy Spirit.** Many passages of the Bible attest to this truth. Note just one.

Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have **lied to the Holy Spirit ... You have not lied to men but to God.**" Acts 5:3,4

Comment: Because the Holy Spirit is God, the third Person of the Holy Trinity, He deserves all the worship, reverence, respect, attention, love, devotion, sacrifice, praise and cooperation that we could ever give to Him. Even though we know this **we often treat Him as some impersonal religious power.** The evidence that we do so is seen in the way we often fail to acknowledge Him in the bustle of our daily life. We say "Good Morning" to our family members and friends -- but perhaps not to the Holy Spirit. We acknowledge the presence of others when they are present with us but often fail to acknowledge the presence of the Spirit.

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The Holy Spirit has come to be our Helper. However, we often read the Bible without thinking of asking Him for help (the very One Who inspired the Scripture!), and in temptation we act as though we are on our own, or hope someone is praying for us, when, in actuality, the Holy Spirit couldn't be closer and more available to us. I am not advocating a continual speaking to the Holy Spirit. Speaking occasionally would be appropriate, such as in daily devotions, and in times of need. Giving Him His rightful place in our life will develop into an attitude of dependence. Such an attitude will enable us to think of Him correctly, and depend on Him, when we hear or read the Bible, live our daily life, or seek to witness to someone.

It is a terrible sin to neglect God! None of us would stand for this kind of treatment. If this is true of us we must repent and never fall back into such a callused and irreverent way of relating to the Holy Spirit. God has feelings too.

- B. Another reason why this subject is important is because **the Holy Spirit is the Gift of God the Father and the Gift of the Lord Jesus to us.**

Exalted to the right hand of God, he (the Lord Jesus) has received from the Father **the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.** Acts 2:33 (See also Acts 2:38; 10:45)

Comment: It is hardly an act of courtesy when we treat an important gift, given out of love, at great sacrifice, and for our total and transforming good -- as unimportant and not worthy of attention. And, in particular, when this Gift is Person.

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The way we live is often an evidence of such discourtesy. Many believers are afraid of the Holy Spirit and the Biblical teaching about Him -- and yet have not studied the Bible. Many do not understand the distinction between His gifts and fruit. And many more have never asked the Holy Spirit to teach them about His gifts and welcomed those He would release within them. We should not live with such a sinful attitude toward God Himself and His wonderful provision.

C. A third reason why this subject is so important has to do with **the will of God**. As we study the Scripture we see that it is the express will of God for every believer to be filled with the Holy Spirit, motivated by Him, and to honor Him by cooperating with Him in the manifestation of His Fruit and Gifts.

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you **another Counselor to be with you forever** -- the Spirit of truth. John 14:16,17A

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. **Instead, be filled with the Spirit.** Eph 5:18

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Comment: These verses, only a few on this subject, emphasize the important place the Person and work of the Holy Spirit has in the will of God for all believers. We must learn to give the Holy Spirit, and His work, that place of priority. Every sincere Christian treats God's will as highly relevant and an essential for progress. Too often, however, while making sure we give our tithe, attend Church, pray at the table, and strive to keep the Ten Commandments, we **upon the filling and anointing of the Holy Spirit as a rather option**, that hardly needs serious attention. A believer may not attitude and be pleasing to God. We need the Holy Spirit even not feel like we do.

We must choose, make a decision of the will, **to do the will of God** -- in spite of how we feel and in spite of our fear and questions. We have been invited to ask the Holy Spirit, **the second Person of the Trinity, and the gift of the Father and Son into our life**. To fail to do so in an act of full surrender to God is a serious sin.

Should we stop our study and invite Him in now?

II. Some Encouraging Prophecies Regarding the Holy Spirit.

A. An encouraging Old Testament prophecy.

And **afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.** Your sons and daughters will **prophesy**, your old men will dream **dreams**, your young men will see **visions**. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. Joel 2:28,29

- Comment:**
1. The word **afterward** indicates a time in the future when this prophecy will be fulfilled. This does not mean the Holy Spirit was not working in Old Testament days. His work has always been that of bringing the will of God to pass. That is why we see O.T. prophets, priests, and kings anointed of the Holy Spirit to do their work in the Theocracy. And, that anointing also came to Moses and Joshua (who was said to be **filled with the Spirit**, Deut 34:9), the various Judges, Aholiab and Bezaleel who built the Tabernacle, and others in leadership or in some crisis.
 2. The words **I will** indicate the sovereign plan of God. The prophecy indicates a new day is coming when all the people of God will receive the Holy Spirit.
 3. The words **all people, sons, daughters, servants and both men and women** tell us that all believers will be given the Holy Spirit in some equal measure. No one will be left out. All distinctions will be irrelevant in that day.
 4. The words **prophesy, dreams and visions** indicate some of the unusual results that will happen when this prophesy is fulfilled. All believers may receive some type of divine illumination. We should not jump to the conclusion that the content of such ministry will be on the same level as the authority of the Bible which is due to inspiration. That authority is always spoken of in the Bible as final. There is nothing that may be received in a prophecy, a dream, or a vision that would be authoritative like the Bible. Illustrations of this type of illumination may be seen in the ministry to Philip (Acts 8:26); Ananias (Acts 9:10-16); Cornelius (Acts 10:3-8); and others. It's important to see that none of these thought their word from the Lord was intended for anyone but themselves, and they were right. The same holds true for today.

B. Some encouraging New Testament prophecies.

1. The prophecy of John the Baptist.

I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. **He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit** and with fire. Matthew 3:11

Comment: Here we are instructed in the great truth that through the Lord Jesus and His work the believer was to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Following the Resurrection the Savior instructed His disciples not to leave Jerusalem until

baptized

that event had taken place (Acts 1:4-8). The Apostle Paul explained the fulfillment of this promise in that all New Testament believers are by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ (the universal Church) (I Corinthians 12:13).

This baptism may be called a "**relational baptism**" in that it happens when we are born again and it brings us into a living relationship with the Lord Jesus. Some believe a second baptism in or by the Holy Spirit may be received with a release of His gifts. I would rather call that "the filling of the Spirit" mentioned in Eph 5:18 and expect such an unusual moment to happen over and over in that the verse can be translated "Be being filled with the Spirit." If one may wish to continue to call that by use of the word "baptism" then it may be good to refer to it as an "**experiential baptism**" to distinguish it from that which the Bible states is given to all believers at the new birth.

2. The prophecy of the Lord Jesus in John 7.

On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If a man is thirsty, **let him come to me and drink**. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, **streams of living water will flow from within him**." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified. John 7:37-39

Comment: The concept of "living water" is often used in the Scripture to indicate a spiritual ministry from God to His people. That is the thought here. It is encouraging to see that this is to come to pass by the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer. And, a further truth is found here. We are clearly shown in these verses that **our relationship with or to the Holy Spirit is defined (dependent on) our relationship with the Lord Jesus**. We cannot earn the benefits of the Holy Spirit's presence or ministry. It is all of divine grace. However, we cannot experience these great benefits if we are not living in God's will. More of this will be said later.

3. The prophecy of the Lord Jesus in John 16.

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, **he will guide you into all 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 bring glory to me** by taking from what is mine and making it known to you." John 16:13,14

Comment: In these verses we see the major goal in the ministry of the Holy Spirit. His work is to glorify the Lord Jesus and a significant part of that was to be done

in and through the believer. By leading the Christian into an increasing conformity to the Lord Jesus (Rom 8:28,29), through the power of the Crucifixion and Resurrection (Phil 3:10), the Holy Spirit will produce fruit in the believer's daily life (John 15:5; Gal 5:22,23). Such a life will cause the Lord Jesus to be glorified. What an encouragement this is. We do not have to live the Christian life in our own strength. God has made every provision for us.

4. The prophecy of the Lord Jesus in Acts 1.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit come on you; and you will be witnessed in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.
Acts 1:8

Comment: The Lord Jesus, after His Resurrection, told the Disciples not to leave Jerusalem until this promise was fulfilled (Acts 1:4,5). This was to be a significant key to their ministry. It is important that we understand how all believers are included in this promise. God has given us the Holy Spirit as divine enablement for our life and our work. **The reason why many of us as believers are living a life of weakness and attend Churches that are not growing and reaching their community -- is because this promise, although fulfilled in every believer, has been allowed, through neglect or sin, to remain only a legal benefit.** This situation, so prevalent among us, is the reason our Lord commands that we live a life "being filled with Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18).

III. The Encouraging Historical Fulfillment of Prophecy Regarding the Holy Spirit.

When the day of Pentecost came, ... violent wind ... tongues of fire ... All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Acts 2:1-4

Then Peter stood up ... "These men are not drunk ... **No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people ..."**
Acts 2:14-17

Exalted to the right hand of God, **he (the Lord Jesus) has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.** Acts 2:33

Comment: These passages tell of the historical fulfillment of the prophecies referred to above. It is thrilling to know that the Church, which was born on the Day of Pentecost, is a baptized and anointed Church. When one becomes a believer today, he is made a member of that Church (I Cor 12:13). As a consequence, through his relationship with Jesus Christ and His Church, the believer is

baptized and anointed with the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20). Pentecost we possess all the value, benefit, serve successfully. It must be kept in mind that legal -- **a resource that we must practice in fruitfulness in daily life.**

Holy Spirit, and is enabled to carry out the Because we now live on this side of and power of Pentecost to live and these wonderful benefits are largely **order to have the joy, power, and**

The tragedy in the life of so many believers, is that the great benefits of Pentecost are still largely legal. Perhaps due to ignorance, or passivity, or neglect, or the fear created by the enemy -- many believers live with self-centeredness instead of love, depression instead of joy, anxiety instead of peace, weakness instead of power, and barrenness instead of fruitfulness. We must compare our daily life and its characteristics with that described in the book of Acts, and with Rom 14:15; 15:13; I Cor 4:20; I Cor 12,13; Gal 5:22,23; and Eph 5:18-21 to name only a few verses. **Since the Holy Spirit has been given to us, and He seeks to glorify the Lord Jesus in our life -- it is a sin of tragic consequences not to be filled with Him.**

IV. Some Encouraging Instructions and Promises Regarding the Holy Spirit.

A. The Kingdom of God is carried on through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

But if I drive out demons **by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come unto you.** Matt 12:27

Jesus answered, "**I tell you the truth, unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.**" John 3:5

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Rom 14:17

Comment: These passages clearly present the truth of the work of the Holy Spirit in God's Kingdom. We enter the Kingdom through His ministry, we grow through His ministry, and He enables us to do the work of the Kingdom by His presence, gifts, and direction. Once again we should be encouraged. And, we must realize how important the Holy Spirit should be in our daily life.

B. Important promises are related to the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation--but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; **but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.** Romans 8:12,13

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, **so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.** Romans 15:13.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Galatians 5:22,23

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 saints, 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. Ephesians 3:16-19

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good...wisdom, ... knowledge, ... faith, ... gifts of healing, ... miraculous powers, ... prophecy, ... ability to distinguish between spirits, ... ability to speak in different kinds of tongues, ... the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each man, just as he determines. I Corinthians 12:7-11.

Comment: These passages remind us that the Holy Spirit is the One through Whom the grace of God in the redeeming work of the Lord Jesus is channeled into our life. He has come as our Helper to lead us into that grace, teach us the Bible, enable us to obey, and to fill us with Himself. This divine provision should be overwhelming to us and banish all discouragement for ever.

We must be careful to internalize these promises each day. As we pray it would be good to say, "And now, Holy Spirit, I invite You into all of my life, and ask You to work with me so **I may put to death the misdeeds of my body.**" Continue to do this with all the promises listed above -- and others that you will find in your reading of the Bible. The Holy Spirit is waiting for our honest decisions of faith -- so He may minister to us -- and fill us with Himself.

V. Some Encouraging Exhortations Regarding the Holy Spirit.

Since we live by the Spirit, **let us keep in step with the Spirit.** Galatians 5:25

Be not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, **be [being] filled with the Spirit**. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 5:18-10.

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. Eph. 6:18

Comment: These exhortations teach us how deeply our Father desires the Holy Spirit to be involved in our life. As we meditate on these passages we recognize that we can be, or should be, motivated and lead by the Holy Spirit. It is also helpful to see how deeply our emotions and thought life are to be involved. We are encouraged as we see all the areas in which the Holy Spirit desires to be our Helper. We cannot earn His help -- it is the free gift of our Heavenly Father. **Our place is to invite Him into our life, into all the areas of our life, and then to cooperate with Him.**

VI. Some Serious Warnings Regarding the Holy Spirit.

Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart **that you have lied to the Holy Spirit** and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? ... **How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord?"** Acts 5:3,9

"You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: **You always resist the Holy Spirit!**" Acts 7:51

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Ephesians 4:30

Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. I Thess. 5:19,20

Comment: We may remember times when we have committed these sins. **It is tragically easy to pretend, be hypocritical, resist what the Holy Spirit wants to do in our life, grieve Him by neglecting Him and His gifts, and pouring spiritual cold-water on His ministry and people.** These verses explain to us some of the main reasons why we are such cold, weak, powerless, passive, and disobedient Christians. The Holy Spirit is a Person and a gentle Person. He [usually] will not force Himself into our life. **Many believers, without realizing what they are doing, live a type of life in which they are constantly committing the sins we are warned about in these verses.** Their very attitude toward God, the Church, the Bible, and life itself in an offense to the Holy Spirit. It is no wonder the Holy Spirit is not often among us with His blessing, gifts, and power.

Conclusion:

A. The few verses we have considered in this overview have forced us to realize how important the presence and work of the Holy Spirit **should be** in our daily life. **We now**

know that our Heavenly Father wants us to come to Him in humility and repentance for how we have neglected His wonderful gift. He wants us to ask Him to give us the Holy Spirit. He wants us to open every area of our life to the Holy Spirit so He can fill us with Himself.

"Which of your fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, **how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!**" Luke 11:11-13

Comment: These verses are a part of a summary exhortation given to conclude the parable spoken earlier in the chapter. The parable was about a man who had unexpected guests come to him in the night. He had no food for them and so he goes to a neighbor friend and knocks on the door asking for food. His neighbor shouts that he does not want to get up. The man continues to knock because his need is so great (Jewish custom) and he refuses to stop and go away. The Lord Jesus commends the man, even though it appears to us like a discourteous activity that would make us ashamed.

The application is that we should ask for the Holy Spirit with the same shamelessness and intensity. As David Gooding states in his book *According to Luke*, the man in the parable was "shameless" because he had a great need. He goes on to say that we would be as "shameless" in getting our doctor out of bed and demanding he comes to our house -- if we had a family member having a heart attack!

And, we should come to our Father in Heaven with the same sense of need and continue to ask Him for the Holy Spirit, even though we are now on this side of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was given. The reason is evident: as Paul prayed for the believers in Ephesus for the Holy Spirit to come to them (Eph. 1:17; 3:16) we always stand in a spiritual position in which we are in the same desperate need as they.

B. It may be helpful to pray the prayer found in the introduction each day for a week.

May our Heavenly Father open our spiritual eyes to the work of the Holy Spirit.

Victor Matthews