

Unit Theme: The Fruit of the Spirit

April 21, 2024 (Lesson 8)

LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

- 1. Be Born of the Spirit** (John 3:5-8; Titus 3:3-7)
- 2. The Spirit's Work in the World** (John 14:15-16, 25-26; 16:7-11)
- 3. Walk in the Spirit** (Galatians 5:16-21; Romans 8:1-11)

Central Truth: The Holy Spirit is central to Christian living.

Focus: Recognize and submit to the Holy Spirit's influence in every aspect of our lives.

Evangelism Emphasis: Anyone can experience life in the Spirit through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Golden Text: "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16).

It has been said, "God loves us as we are, but He loves us too much to let us remain as we are."

The statement implies our conversion experience is a new beginning followed by a lifetime of growth and development. The Apostle Paul would agree. He explains although we are saved by grace and not by works (Eph. 2:8-9), we are saved for the purpose of doing "good works" (v. 10).

However, we are mistaken if we think we can serve God in our own strength. We are weak, but God is strong; and "greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). As Christians, we are walking with God, who indwells us by His Holy Spirit. God has sent His Spirit into our hearts, and the Spirit is working to purify us, enable us, and comfort us. The Holy Spirit enables us to love God and love people. The Holy Spirit teaches us the ways of God and guides us into all truth. The Holy Spirit transforms our minds and hearts and conforms us to the image of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit empowers our prayers and our witness. We will experience the joy and peace of God's presence as we practice walking in the Spirit daily.

For the next six weeks, we will explore many of the ways the Holy Spirit works in our lives.

These lessons will guide us into a deeper, Spirit-filled walk with God.

1. BE BORN OF THE SPIRIT

A. The New Birth (John 3:5-8)

5 Jesus answered, 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. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. 8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

When speaking about salvation, the Bible uses a rich variety of words and symbols, each one emphasizing a specific benefit of God's grace. Through faith in the blood of Christ, we are justified (Rom. 5:9), redeemed (Eph. 1:7), forgiven (Heb. 9:22), converted (Matt. 18:3), adopted (Gal. 4:5), cleansed (Heb. 9:14), and reconciled to God (Col. 1:20). Through faith in Christ, we are delivered (Rom. 5:9), healed (John 12:40), washed (Rev. 1:5), made new creatures in Him (2 Cor. 5:17), born again (John 1:13), and we have eternal life (6:54). In these mighty acts, God transforms sinners into saints. He restores the broken relationship between God and humanity. He restores in us the image of God. He rescues us from the kingdom of darkness and brings us into the kingdom of God (Col. 1:13). He makes us His children, part of His family (John 1:12).

This week's lesson first focuses on the aspect of salvation Jesus called the *new birth*. Jesus spoke of the new birth to a man named Nicodemus, who was a leader among the Jews and was probably a member of the Sanhedrin—the highest governing body of the Jewish people. As Jesus explained the new birth, He emphasized four important points: (1) The new birth is necessary for entrance into the kingdom of God (John 3:5). (2) It is called a *birth* because it is the beginning of new life for the believer. (3) The new birth is not a physical event; rather, it is a birth by “the Spirit” (v. 6). The word “again” (v. 7) is a translation of the Greek word *anōthen*, which can mean “again” or “from above.”

This double meaning suggests the new birth is a “second” birth (see v. 4), and it is a birth from Heaven; that is, through the Spirit. (4) Although the new birth is a real experience, it is somewhat of a mystery, like the mystery of the wind (v. 8). We can feel the effects of the wind, but we do not know where it comes from or where it goes.

To be born again is to experience the restoration of the image of God, to be as guiltless as a newborn baby. In the symbolism of Israel’s exodus from Egyptian bondage, to be born again is to pass through the waters of birth like Israel passed through the Red Sea. After passing through the sea, Israel was given the covenant (Ex. 20—24); and after passing through the waters of the new birth, we enter into the “new covenant” (Jer. 31:31; Heb. 12:24); and we set out on the life of faith as part of the family of God (Gal. 3:26).

According to the Apostle Peter, to be *born again* means to have a new origin and a new nature by the Word of God. We are “born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Peter 1:23). To be *born again* means to be recreated in the image of God, to have a fresh start with God and a fresh start in living by the Spirit of God.

Embrace Grace

No baby is born as a result of his or her own efforts. The doctor doesn’t holler down the birth canal with a megaphone, “Come on, kid, try harder! Work harder! It all depends on you!” The mom works hard, and the dad claims he works hard, but the baby is just along for the ride.

Spiritual birth happens by grace when we believe. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (NKJV).—Judah Smith

B. Washing and Renewal (Titus 3:3-7)

3 For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts

and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. 4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, 5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; 6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; 7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

In the Apostle Paul's letter to Titus, he emphasizes several additional aspects of the new birth. The new birth is mentioned in verse 5, where it is translated as "regeneration" in the King James Version. Instead of *regeneration*, other translations use "rebirth" (NIV) and "new birth" (CEB, NLT), suggesting the terms *regeneration*, *new birth*, and *born again* have the same meaning.

Paul points out we are born again not on the basis of our works but on the basis of God's mercy. He describes the new birth as a "washing" (v. 5), which signifies purification of the heart and spiritual cleansing. This may refer also to water baptism, which symbolizes the washing away of our sins. This "renewing" of life (v. 5) lifts us out of darkness into a life of "hope" (v. 7). Similarly, the Apostle Peter wrote, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3 NASB). Therefore, the new birth is both a cleansing from sin and an impartation of spiritual life.

How does the new birth affect our daily lives? To be born again is to be given new life by the Holy Spirit. This new life is more than an extension of the old life or an improvement of the old life. This new life is the life of God himself given to us in the body and blood of Jesus (John 6:53). The old life—marred by being "foolish and disobedient" and enslavement to "many lusts and pleasures . . . evil and envy" (Titus 3:3 NLT)—is not really life at all; it is "death" (John 5:24). To be born again is to have new life given and sustained by the Word of God—a life that can live victoriously over sin and the devil (1 John 3:9-10).

Those who have been born again cannot be hurt by the “second death” (Rev. 2:11).

§ *How can we receive the “kindness and love” (v. 4) and “mercy” (v. 5) God offers us?*

2. THE SPIRIT’S WORK IN THE WORLD

A. Indwelling Believers and Speaking Truth (John 14:15-16, 25-26)

15 If ye love me, keep my commandments. 16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.

25 These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. 26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

God is revealed in Scripture as the *Trinity*: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Although we often assign certain roles to each member of the Trinity (the Father as Creator, the Son as Redeemer, and the Spirit as indwelling the believer), all three persons have a role in all of God’s works. In today’s lesson, we are learning the Holy Spirit is the person of the Trinity who serves as the bridge between God and His creation. The Spirit manifests God’s presence and power. The Spirit creates, sustains, saves, heals, restores, empowers, guides, fills, completes, and perfects. Essentially, the Spirit does the works of God in all creation, in the covenant community, and in the individual believer. While contemporary popular theology gives priority to the work of the Spirit in the individual, the Bible teaches that, even when the Spirit is working within an individual, His goal is to benefit the covenant community and the world.

Jesus knew His time on earth was almost over, and He wanted to prepare His disciples for what was about to happen. They had followed Him and leaned on His strength. He had been their constant companion, counselor, guide, and helper; but, He would be leaving them. Therefore, Jesus promised to send them “another Comforter” (v. 16) who would provide them with strength and help after Jesus had departed.

The Comforter is the *Paraclete* (from the Greek *parakletos*), which means “a person who is called to our side to help.” The Paraclete walks alongside the believer as a companion, an encourager, a helper, and a strengthener. Newer Bible versions translate the Paraclete as “Helper” (NKJV, NASB), “Counselor” (RSV), “Companion” (CEB), and “Advocate” (NLT, NIV). This variety of translations demonstrates the broad influence of the Holy Spirit, and Jesus explained seven major aspects of the Holy Spirit’s ministry to believers.

1. *The Holy Spirit is a personal companion.* The Spirit is more than a force, a power, an idea, or an influence—the Spirit is a person and is described as having personal attributes. The Spirit will “teach . . . bring all things to your remembrance” (John 14:26), and “testify” (15:26). Jesus had been their companion, but now He would send “another Paraclete”—a companion just like Jesus. Although invisible, the Spirit was to be a real friend, teacher, and guide.

2. *The Spirit is our helper.* How does the Holy Spirit help us? He gives us strength and enables us to be bold in our witness. He is ready to provide strength, courage, wisdom, and grace in any form (see Acts 2:14; 4:13, 31; 9:27, 29; 14:3; 19:8). The Spirit helps us through the spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12—14). The Spirit helps us in prayer (Rom. 8:26; Eph. 6:18; Jude 20).

3. *The Spirit is our teacher* (John 14:26). Jesus is “the truth” (v. 6), and the Holy Spirit is the “Spirit of truth” (v. 17). The Spirit continues the ministry where Jesus left off, but the teaching of the Spirit does not displace the teaching of Jesus. The Spirit brings to remembrance the words of Jesus and illuminates those words (see 1 Cor. 2:12).

4. *The Spirit indwells the believer.* Jesus said, the “Advocate [will] be with you forever” (John 14:16 NET). The word *abide* (Greek, *meno*) means “to live, to dwell.” It does not mean a temporary visit, but rather a permanent indwelling.

5. *The Spirit witnesses.* Jesus said, “When the Helper comes . . . He will testify about Me” (15:26 NASB).

The Comforter witnesses on Jesus' behalf. He testifies Jesus is the "Son of God" (John 1:33-34); and He empowers us to witness (Acts 1:8).

6. *The Holy Spirit guides believers* (John 16:13). Things were about to happen that would crush the disciples if they did not have the Holy Spirit to guide them in understanding. The Spirit guides the individual believer in many ways as well as guiding the church in evangelism (Acts 8:29), leadership (13:2), and doctrine (ch. 15).

7. *The Spirit glorifies Jesus* (John 16:14). The experience of Spirit baptism is wonderful, and it helps us to glorify and worship Jesus (4:24).

§ *How do we express our love for Jesus (John 14:15), and how does the Holy Spirit help us do this (v. 26)?*

B. Bringing Conviction to Sinners (John 16:7-11)

7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. 8 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: 9 Of sin, because they believe not on me; 10 Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; 11 Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

The influence of the Spirit in us starts long before we become Christians. Through the Spirit, God works in us to prepare our hearts for the Gospel. We call this ministry of the Spirit "prevenient grace." Jesus explained the Holy Spirit "will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8). When He spoke of "the world," Jesus was referring to all unbelievers—everyone who is outside the kingdom of God. The word *reprove* means "to cross-examine and to convict of a crime."

A good Roman judge was required to cross-examine the accused three times, and the "world" is guilty on three charges. (1) The world is guilty in regard to sin because they are walking in darkness, and they cannot please God or obey His commandments. However, the ultimate sin is *unbelief*; and Jesus said,

“They believe not on me” (v. 9). (2) The world is guilty in regard to true righteousness because they are seeking salvation through their own righteousness. The Holy Spirit will show the world that true righteousness comes through what Christ established by His death, resurrection, and ascension (v. 10). (3) The world is guilty in regard to judgment. Jesus was saying, “I will cross-examine the world concerning its judgment.” The world thought Jesus was being judged at the cross, but Satan was being judged there (v. 11). “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out” (12:31). Because it lacks judgment, the world has chosen Satan the liar, instead of Jesus the Truth.

Woeful Lack of Conviction

The old-fashioned method of evangelism was to make people weep, but the modern “Hollywood” way is to make people laugh. Everybody has to have a jolly good time. . . . We must have plenty of jokes or it would not be a good meeting. That is why there is such a woeful lack of conviction of sin in modern evangelism. The Holy Spirit cannot work in a frivolous atmosphere.—Michael L. Brown (*Hyper-Grace*)

3. WALK IN THE SPIRIT

A. Flesh Versus Spirit (Galatians 5:16-21)

16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. 18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

The Spirit-filled lifestyle requires us to cooperate with and respond to the promptings of the Holy

Spirit. We “walk in the Spirit” (v. 16) as we faithfully obey His guidance. The word “walk” encompasses our behavior, our total lifestyle; and “the lust of the flesh” refers to the desires that come from our old fallen nature (v. 16). As long as we submit to the Holy Spirit, we will not be controlled by unrighteous desires and temptations. Our old nature and its selfish desires stand in opposition to the will of God and to the leadings of the Spirit (v. 17). However, if we follow the Spirit, we will not fall under the condemnation of the Law (v. 18); and we are not obligated to obey the ceremonial requirements of the Old Testament Law in order to please God. Early church leaders met in Jerusalem and decided, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it was not necessary for Christians to observe the Sabbath rules and other aspects of “the law of Moses” (Acts 15:5-29; see also Gal. 6:15; Col. 2:11).

In Galatians 5:19-23, Paul provides two contradictory lists. The first list shows the “works” of the old nature; the second list names the “fruit” of the Spirit. When people habitually engage in the works of the old nature, they demonstrate they are not genuine Christians. These sinful practices fall into four groups. The first group is connected to sexual sins and includes “sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality” (ESV). The second group includes sins associated with heathen worship: “idolatry, sorcery” (NKJV). The third group lists sins that are committed against one’s neighbor: “hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy” (NIV). The fourth group names two sins that exemplify intemperance: “drunkenness, carousing” (NASB). These sins stand in conflict to the work of the Holy Spirit in believers.

Paul concludes this section by asserting Christians are not under the power of the old nature. They have the power to live free from the works of the old nature because they “have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (v. 24 NASB).

Under the Influence

An Indianapolis newspaper, the *IndyStar*, reported recently that a candidate for sheriff was arrested for

driving under the influence of alcohol. Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs will dull our senses, slow our reaction times, confuse our thoughts, cause memory loss, inhibit our judgment, and impair our sense of right and wrong. In contrast, Christians should live under the influence of the Holy Spirit, which will heighten our awareness and give us clarity, wisdom, and sound judgment.

B. Godly Mind-set (Romans 8:1-11)

5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. 6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. 7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. 8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

There is “no condemnation” (v. 1) to those who are in Christ, because we have been freed in Him by the Gospel of the life-giving Spirit. We have been freed from “the law” which, although good in itself, is, through our corruption, the source of “sin and death” (v. 2). By virtue of Jesus condemning sin in the flesh, and through the power of the Spirit of life, we are freed in Him both from condemnation and the dominion of sin.

Life, which could never come by the Law, now comes to us through Christ (v. 3). It is a life of holy thoughts, pure desires, love, joy, and peace. It is truly Christ’s life dwelling within us.

The Spirit-filled lifestyle grows out of Spirit-filled thinking. Our minds are the battleground where good and evil are set in conflict against each other (see Prov. 23:7). Therefore, we must learn to have the “mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16; Phil. 2:5; Rom. 12:2). We can choose to “mind the things of the flesh” or to mind the “things of the Spirit” (8:5). The word *mind* means “to think about something, to dwell on it, to ponder it.” People who live according to the old nature dwell on the sinful desires of the old nature, but believers who seek the Spirit will think about the things of the Spirit (see Phil. 4:8).

If we dwell on sinful thoughts, we will not be able to please God (Rom. 8:8). Setting our minds on

sinful desires leads to death, but setting our minds on the things of the Spirit will produce “life and peace” (v. 6). The astonishing reality that enables us to lead godly lives is found in verse 11: “He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you” (NASB).

§ *In what sense should we as Christians be both “dead” and “alive” (v. 10 NASB)?*

BECOMING MORE LIKE CHRIST

The formation of Christian character is not something we can do on our own. Christ is within us, changing us by His Holy Spirit. The transforming work of the Holy Spirit began when we were still sinners, when we were brought under the conviction of the Spirit. Then, when we repented of our sins, we were born again by the Spirit; and the Spirit implanted new life within us. The Spirit continues to dwell in us, teaching us, guiding us, and changing us. Although we must rely on the power of the Spirit daily, we must also cooperate with the Spirit’s work in us by thinking about the things of God and pursuing them diligently. As we walk with Jesus, study His Word, and engage in regular worship and prayer, we become more and more like Jesus. The Apostle Paul said believers are being transformed into Christ’s image “from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18).

Daily Devotions

- M. The Spirit Strives With Sinners (Genesis 6:1-8)
- T. The Spirit Resisted by Israel (Isaiah 63:7-10)
- W. The Spirit Changes Lives (Ezekiel 36:25-29)
- T. Characterized by the Spirit (Acts 6:1-7)
- F. The Spirit Sets Free (Romans 8:1-10)
- S. The Spirit Confirms Our Redemption (Ephesians 1:3-14)