

***BluePrints: Indwelling***  
***By Jason Huff***  
***July 5, 2014***  
***Joel 2:28-32; John 14:15-27,16:7-15; Romans 8:1-11***

Our final Scripture reading this evening is Romans 8:1-11. I invite you to turn there in your Bibles and to pull out the notes in the bulletin so you can follow along. Let's listen to the Word of God. "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit. Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you."

No book intimidated me more in seminary than one called *Life In The Spirit*. It was the third volume in a trilogy that described the work and persons of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I had to outline every page of every book. It was exhausting. I thought once I'd reached *Life In The Spirit*, my biggest work was behind me. I was wrong. 538 pages of the tiniest print I've ever seen! Turns out there is a ton to say about the Spirit I'd never thought about before.

The Holy Spirit is the most misunderstood and least-known person in Scripture. It hasn't helped that for centuries we referred to Him as the Holy Ghost – which may have made sense in early English but now makes Him sound like something in a haunted house. Because the Father and the Son have strong identifiable personalities, the gentle ways of the Spirit get lost in the shuffle. Despite that, the Holy Spirit is the person of God with whom we in this room have the most direct contact, and through Him we know the Father and the Son. Joy awaits the faithful Christian who learns who the Holy Spirit is, what He does, and how to relate to Him.

As we've gone through the opening essential tenets of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, we've seen Scripture, the Father, and the Son addressed. Now we turn to the Spirit in essential four:

The Holy Spirit has come to glorify Christ and to apply the saving work of Christ to our hearts. He convicts us of sin and draws us to the Savior. Indwelling our hearts, He gives new life to us, empowers and imparts gifts to us for service. He instructs and guides us into all truth, and seals us for the day of redemption.

The opening sentence is super important. *The Holy Spirit has come to glorify Christ.* The reason we don't get a deeply strong sense of personality from the Holy Spirit is because His purpose is not to glorify Himself but to glorify the Son of God. He is unique, but when we see the Spirit, we see the Father and the Son distinctly. The Holy Spirit acts as a spiritual telescope – to bring into clarity those things that are distorted to the naked eye.

Today's passage includes four unique names for the Spirit. One is simply the Spirit. Another is the Spirit of life. The third is the Spirit of God, and the fourth is the Spirit of Christ. These aren't four different spirits but four names for the one Holy Spirit. It's fascinating that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of the Son. In a way beyond comprehension, the Holy Spirit incorporates in Himself the very nature and essence of the Father and Son. We sometimes lose sight of the Holy Spirit because He shines the Father and Son so brightly for us.

This might sound like word games, but it's not, and here's why: if you want to see the perfect example of how a Christian lives to glorify Christ, look to the Spirit. My prayer is not that you would go home today and say, "Boy, that Jason preached a good sermon – what's for dinner?" My prayer is that you would be so intrigued by the Spirit that you would talk about Him and emulate Him. I'd love it if you were so enthralled with the Holy Spirit that in your study of Him and growing relationship with Him you forgot me and my sermonizing altogether. That's how the Spirit works too – He makes Himself transparent so we see the Father and Son.

As Christians, we want to glorify Christ, but we get in the way sometimes. God made you with unique likes and dislikes, unique talents, unique ways to glorify Him, and that's good. God wants you to use those for His glory, because He will reach people through your sharing of your gifts on behalf of Christ. It turns bad only when the glory of God gets lost in the glorification of us.

I've seen a guy from the Power Team rip phone books in half and lift five times his body weight. Yet I couldn't tell you that guy's name. I know that he did it to tell kids and teens about Jesus, and he did it really well. He said all his talent was so little in comparison to what Jesus did for us and offers us through His sacrifice on the cross. You might have a similar talent. That's great. How do you point to Jesus through it? The Holy Spirit shows us what it is like to get out of the way and let Christ shine through us. It's the perfect starting point for our essential.

The next part of the essential: *The Holy Spirit applies the saving work of Christ to our hearts. He convicts us of sin and draws us to the Savior.* We make a big mistake when we ignore what the Holy Spirit does in our salvation. We sometimes think that on our own, we can choose salvation -- that Jesus made it possible, but we are in charge of taking hold of it. If that's true, if we "choose" to follow Jesus, we've earned salvation. It must be given to us.

But the universal church has always said that the Holy Spirit brings us to salvation. Without the Holy Spirit working in our hearts, we wouldn't have any interest in God. We would have no desire to be saved from His wrath. If the Holy Spirit didn't intervene, we would be perfectly content to live and die apart from God. Our sin nature makes God repellent to us.

The Holy Spirit makes it possible for us to respond to God's grace in faith. The first step is the Spirit convicting us of sin. Lots of people feel guilty, mainly because they are sad they have gotten caught. There are many churchgoers who feel guilt about things they have done but no conviction. Conviction of sin is very different.

Conviction happens when we recognize in our bones that we have done something genuinely wrong, and that we have offended the holy and sacred God of the universe by our actions. Conviction brings us fear not because we know that we will be punished but that we should be. Conviction makes us realize that nothing we do can fix our standing before God. Conviction is frightening, and it's absolutely of the Holy Spirit. It's the realization that we stand condemned before God Almighty because we have betrayed Him.

It's that same Holy Spirit who then draws us to the Savior. In our conviction we know we must find a way out. The Spirit moves us forward, pulling us along, bringing us ever nearer to Jesus, the One whose sacrifice will save us if we believe. Some traditions believe that it's at this point our free will and choice takes over; in our tradition, we believe that even faith itself is born in us by the Holy Spirit and not by something in and of ourselves. But we know that it is the Holy Spirit who makes the work of Christ come alive in our hearts. He draws us, works in us, and never stops until the good news of Jesus' saving death and resurrection is written across our hearts.

You might ask, "How can I know if the Holy Spirit is working in my life?" I can tell you this – if you have ever been truly convicted of your sin against your Creator, if you have trembled not at the thought of being caught but at the reality that you deserve God's righteous and holy anger poured out on your sins, that didn't come from you. That came from the Holy Spirit. If you have truly experienced the overwhelming desire to turn to Christ, to turn all your sin over to Him and flee from it, if you have wanted Jesus not for selfish gain but simply to be set free from the power of sin and death, that's the Spirit. He's working. He's there.

Next phrase tells us what He does precisely: *Indwelling our hearts, He gives new life to us*. He doesn't just come and go as a frequent visitor. The Holy Spirit dwells within the Christian. That's the special gift that Jesus gives to us in the Spirit. In the Old Testament, the Spirit rested upon God's people here and there, but we see the Spirit leaving the scene too. When King Saul disobeyed the clear direction of God, the Holy Spirit departed from him. When David committed adultery with Bathsheba, in Psalm 51, his psalm of repentance, he asks, "Take not your Holy Spirit from me!"

But in the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is given as a permanent gift. In the book of Acts, we see word of Jesus spreading all throughout the world. And as new people groups became a part of God's Kingdom, the apostles knew it because the Holy Spirit indwelled people they never would have suspected – Samaritan believers, Gentile believers. Anyone who had truly been saved received the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit indwells us. He has taken up residence in our hearts. Think back to what we heard from Romans 8 – “You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you...and if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.”

That new life is the very life of Christ itself. When we live by the Spirit, when He lives inside us and we obey, we are controlled by Him. This isn't a bad thing. Scripture tells us that we are servant either to God or to the passions and desires of this world. Without the Holy Spirit, we cannot help but follow after the ways that seem right to us – the selfish ways, the ways that lead to death. But with the Spirit, we have the ability to follow after God faithfully. Romans 8 says, “Those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.” For once, we have true life – not just going through the motions, not just existing, but living the way God always wanted us to live.

The tenet continues to say, “[*The Holy Spirit*] empowers [us] and imparts gifts to us for service.” When you are indwelt by the Spirit, you are given special abilities to serve God. Sometimes we wish they were more apparent – that like Spider-Man, we'd just find ourselves able with heightened senses and the ability to cling to walls. But the Holy Spirit gives a variety of gifts to us so that we can serve God in all sorts of ways.

Some of the gifts are pretty unique. 1 Corinthians 12:28 tells us that among the spiritual gifts the Spirit gives are healing, working of miracles, and tongues. Those are amazing gifts. It is still possible that someone might be given those gifts. We see them especially when the church enters a new area that has not heard of Jesus. Amazing signs still happen done through ordinary people like you and me.

But the amazing thing about 1 Corinthians 12:28 is that those amazing gifts are right alongside gifts we don't think a lot about. Mentioned in the same list are gifts of teaching, the ability to help others, and gift of administration. Have you ever thought of administration as a spiritual gift? But it's true! We need all kinds of people with all kinds of God-given talents and gifts to serve God's church.

In the near future, we'll take the time as a church to do a spiritual gifts inventory as a congregation and figure out how God has gifted each one of us. Some of us won't be surprised at all, and others will discover things about themselves they never realized. But everyone has gifts the Holy Spirit not only gives to us but empowers us to use. What God wants us to do, He gives us the power to do through His Holy Spirit. You may feel too small to accomplish what God puts on your heart, but He is bigger than any task He asks you to do.

Moving on...*the Holy Spirit instructs and guides us into all truth.* As Romans 8 said, “those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.” The Spirit teaches us the truth and guides our hearts and minds towards it. In John's gospel, we heard Jesus say, “The Counselor, the Holy Spirit...will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you...when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.”

For the earliest Christians that had no New Testament, the Holy Spirit constantly reminded them of Christ's works and teachings. He inspired the authors of the New Testament to write down Jesus' story faithfully. Even though we have those words, the Spirit leads us to a correct understanding of them. We have seen Scripture misinterpreted over the centuries – sometimes just because of misunderstandings and a lack of background, but sometimes deliberately to fuel a personal agenda or for personal gain. The Holy Spirit leads us back to Scripture time and again and helps us to understand it correctly.

We might question the Holy Spirit when there are so many denominations and beliefs out there that seem similar but just a little different. The truth is, the Holy Spirit instructs and guides, but we still make mistakes. The sin in us still pulls us away from unity with other faithful Christians who might think differently than we do about certain things like the ordination of women or whether or not we should baptize young children. In everything, we strive to hear from the Spirit, knowing He will continue to instruct us as we are able to listen to Him. The good news is, we have a Teacher who is patient with us in our weakness and inability to understand. He remains with us always and waits with further instruction as we are ready for it.

Finally, *the Holy Spirit seals us for the day of redemption*. Did you know that you were permanently adopted into the family of God when you become a true believer? In ancient times, a seal was the mark of a king. It was proof of a binding agreement. It was irrevocable. The seal of the Holy Spirit means we are marked for redemption, that when God's judgment is finally at hand, we will be saved into eternal life. The seal is proof of the promise. God will not go back on His word.

We avoid sin because it pleases God that we would obey Him. But sometimes we worry that when we do sin, we are condemned all over again. That's not true. Ephesians 4:3 gives us both sides of this. It says, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." We do not want to make our hearts heavy with disobedience. We would never invite in a guest to our homes and then give them the worst pillows and short-sheet the beds. But God keeps His promises. We do not worry that we can lose our salvation. More importantly, when we are truly saved, our hearts begin to change so we do not desire those things that would jeopardize our relationship with God. The seal is not just a promise that we will be saved, but that we will be made ready, that the Spirit will work in us until His work is complete.

The mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace, Romans 8 says. Do you have life and peace in your heart and mind? Do you long for more time to spend in God's Word and in prayer? Do you wish to grow closer to Him? All are signs of the grace of the Holy Spirit working in your life. Don't reject them but follow those promptings. If those don't sound like they are a part of your life but you know them to be the way of Life, don't hesitate. If you even have the urge to turn from your sin, that's the Spirit working. Turn to God today, follow Him with all you have, and you will find the Holy Spirit has taken up residence in you. He will give you His gifts and wisdom, and He will seal you for the life to come...abundant, eternal life with the Father, Son, and Himself.