

“WE BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE GIVER OF LIFE”
I Corinthians 2:9-11, Romans 8:9-17, Galatians 5:16-25
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“When travelers go through the airport and put their bags on the conveyor belt, the bags to through an X-ray machine and someone sits there and looks at it. That person sits there looking for something in the bags that doesn’t belong. If they see a metal object in a bag or something that is questionable, they pull the bag owner off to the side and then go all through their belongings. They will get out of the bags anything that does not belong so that the traveler is free to make their trip.

“The Holy Spirit does the same thing. He goes through all of our things in our lives. Sometimes we wonder why it is taking so long for God to make a breakthrough. It is because the Holy Spirit is going through our stuff and He may have picked up on something that’s in our bag that doesn’t belong there. He is not about to take off with someone who’s got questionable baggage.”¹ So He is diligent to purify all those who are traveling with the Lord Jesus.

Today we are investigating the third Person of the Trinity in our study of the Nicene Creed, the Holy Spirit. There is much unknown about the Holy Spirit, but we read in this section a description of who He is: “We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.”

The Holy Spirit is God’s Spirit, who moved over the face of the waters at the creation of the universe, and gave all life to each being created by the Word of God. Being God’s Spirit, who is from God and is God, we give a personality and a pronoun to Him. Since God is recognized as “Father” throughout the Old and New Testaments, He is recognized with a masculine identity, and so we address the Holy Spirit in that same identity. And God’s Holy Spirit proceeds from God to do His work here on the earth. He also enlightens and instructs the people of the world of the reality of God. He moves in people to tell others about the will of God, and enables them to do great and mighty things to prove the

¹ (Tony Evans, *Tony Evans’ Book of Illustrations*, [Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2009] pg. 155, #467)

power and integrity of God.

All of the prophets approved by God spoke through the power of the Holy Spirit. Each one was given the words of the Lord God Almighty to take to the people to whom God was speaking with, challenging them to forsake their own ways and to turn back to the ways of God. The Holy Spirit permitted marvelous acts to be shown to those who needed convincing to change their ways.

Moses spoke to Pharaoh and the Holy Spirit brought about the plagues upon Egypt. Elijah called down fire from heaven that burned up the sacrifice he had made while challenging the prophets of Baal. Elisha was able to stop the Jordan River from flowing until he had crossed by the power of the Holy Spirit working in him, and he even blinded the eyes of the Aramean army when they came to attack him because he was exposing the intentions of the King of Aram to the King of Israel. Ezekiel witnessed work of the Holy Spirit in the awakening of the dry bones in the valley as the Spirit brought back life and flesh and breath into the dead. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were all saved from the fiery furnace of King Nebuchadnezzar by the Holy Spirit of the Lord as proof that there is a God of Israel who is the Almighty God. Likewise, Daniel was also saved from death as the Holy Spirit shut up the mouths of the lions in the den that he had been thrown into. By that same Spirit, Daniel was given the power to interpret dreams and foretell the future humbling of the king, who would spend “7 times” eating grass like the cattle and living in the wild like an animal and being drenched by the dew of heaven. The Spirit of God would search the hearts and minds of all the people, and would entice them to return to service and worship of the Lord.

John the Baptist was empowered by the Holy Spirit to confront the wickedness that the Roman leaders were doing. He spoke out, calling all the people to repent and turn back to worship the Lord God Almighty. And the Holy Spirit worked in the lives of all of the disciples so that they could speak the languages of all the people in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with them so that they might accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Stephen was endowed by the Holy Spirit to confront the leaders of the Jewish Synagogue and to explain that Jesus was the Messiah

that they had long been waiting for. The Holy Spirit worked in the life of Ananias to bring about the salvation of Saul, who became the apostle Paul. And the Holy Spirit worked in Paul to take the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the whole known world at that time. The Holy Spirit saw all of the stuff that these people were hanging onto, convinced them of their errors, and then worked in each one to the glory of God the Father and the Son, Jesus Christ.

And we heard this very thing in our first Scripture lesson of I Corinthians 2:9-11. After Jesus rose from the dead and ascended back into heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit to move among all of God's creation searching for those who desire a closer relationship with God through Jesus Christ. While God desires that all people come to Him so that none are lost, the Holy Spirit works to expose all the evil and wickedness **in our lives** so that once we see those errors, we might confess them, and seek forgiveness for them, so that it is possible to grow closer to the Lord our God.

So Paul reminds us that the Holy Spirit of God "*searches all things, even the deep things of God.*" He probes our life so that if anything is out of sorts with the Word of God, He works to enable us to bring all things into the Light of Jesus Christ. Every word we speak, every thought we think, every intention of our heart is known to the Holy Spirit, and He works to guide us into the image of God Himself. He proves to the world that what it decides to be right and wrong are opposite of what God calls right and wrong. He helps us to understand that the teachings of Jesus are always accurate and true. He works to convince us that our salvation only comes as we repent of our sin and turn to Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit labors continually to lead us to the truth, God's Truth. And the Holy Spirit toils to let us know that eternal life and death are in the balance, and that our decisions determine what direction we will go when we take our last breath here on the earth (John 16:8-11).

All those who follow Jesus, have received the Spirit who is from God to guide and direct us "*so that we may understand what God has freely given us*" (I Cor. 2:12). The spirit of the world attempts to lead us away from God, but the Holy Spirit calls us closer to God so that we may know Him and live for Him in our daily lives. As we let Him lead us, the Holy Spirit can be trusted to pilot our lives to all the

places where God wants us to work for Him.

So “when the Bible says, the Holy Spirit ‘will guide you into all truth...’ (John 16:13), that’s a way of saying that He will be the steering wheel of your life. You see, there are two ways to get to a destination. One way is to look at the map and figure it out yourself as you drive. Another way is to have someone drive you who already knows where they are going.”² The Holy Spirit knows the depths of God and He knows where God wants you to go, and He can take you to those places - but we must trust in Him and allow Him to do that work.

Galatians 5 encourages us to “*walk by the Spirit [so that we] not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want*” (Gal. 5:16-17). When we let the Holy Spirit lead us, He impresses God’s way upon us so that we can see that the desires of the flesh are not what is best for us. Sure, we need to eat and drink. We need to have companionship. We need to worship. But the world tells us to live it up and live by its rules so that we do whatever we want to do without regard to any other rules or guidelines. God has guidelines for us to keep us safe and provide us with real joy, IF we follow them and abide by them.

So the ways of the flesh and the ways of the Spirit are always in conflict and are polar opposites. The Spirit does not want us to waste away, but to live abundantly under the laws of God which guide us into a life that is good and righteous. So the Holy Spirit chides us on our disobedience to God’s laws and ways, and invites us into a new life that brings about even more love and hope and joy than anything that the world could provide.

But the Holy Spirit will not strong-arm us into doing anything that we don’t want to do. He offers us the alternatives to the destructive ways of the world, and calls out to us to trust in Him so that He might lead us into righteousness and life, rather than wickedness and death.

Paul explains this in the Book of Romans, 8:9-17. He explains to the followers of Jesus in Rome,

² (Tony Evans, *Tony Evans’ Book of Illustrations*, pg. 151, #455)

“You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ...”

(Rom. 8:9). Paul is very clear that we cannot live in both venues - the world and the Spirit. It has to be one or the other.

You see, when we profess Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord, the Holy Spirit steps up to expose all of the evil ways of the world so that we might put them to death within us. As followers of Jesus, we are not to indulge in the ways of the world AND the ways of God. They are contrary to each other. They cannot work together. It has to be one or the other, not both and.

And when the Holy Spirit is within us, even though our bodies may waste away or be put to death because of those in the world, the Spirit gives us life. *“He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of His Spirit who lives in you”* (Rom. 8:11). The world strives to take our life away from us by separating us from God in everything we do and say. The Holy Spirit works to give us life by bringing us back into a relationship with God in everything we do and say. It’s can’t be a mixing of both. It has to be one or the other.

So as we choose Jesus Christ as our Savior, we no longer are to focus our attention on the things of the flesh, but we are to focus on the ways of the Spirit so that we might have life. If we live by the things of the world (flesh), there is only death awaiting us. But if we live by the Spirit, who directs us to God through Jesus Christ, there is life awaiting us.

You see, when we let Jesus be our Savior, He adopts us as His own brothers and sisters with Him in the family of God. So the Holy Spirit frees us from all of the snares and traps of the world, and releases all of the bonds that hold us captive so that we might really have life. But the choice is ours to make. If we choose Jesus, the Holy Spirit will gradually expose all of the things in our life that we need to let go of, and the things that we need to become free from, and He works to enable us to find new life as God’s children. Then we can begin to enjoy all that the Spirit has for us as heirs of Jesus.

But how can we tell the difference between the things of this world and the things of God?

Listen to these words of Galatians 5:16-25. (READ Galatians 5:16-25).

Paul lists the ways of the world that highlight the desires of the flesh: “*sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like*” (Gal. 5:19-21). These are the things that the world touts as being important for us to take hold of and run with. The world says to us, “Live it up! Here, let me show you how you can satisfy every physical desire.” And we see it lived before us every day. TV depicts the results of such actions. Movies flaunt their involvement. Magazines and radio encourage us to follow the “rich and famous” into all of these. But they only lead us into emptiness and death. Our whole society seems to encourage us to look at these and say, “Whoo-Hoo! That’s the life for me!”

But the Holy Spirit calls us to something much better. He calls us to “*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law*” (Gal. 5:22-23). These are good and holy. These are beneficial for us to have in our lives. And none of these is against any law that the world or God has. These are the ways that lead us to live!

The world twists and perverts each of these into selfish ambition and self-seeking. But the Holy Spirit calls them into our lives so that as we let Him fill us, we are ready to do the work of the Lord. So there is a battle taking place in our lives between the ways of the Spirit and the ways of the flesh.

So Paul tells us, “*Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit*” (Gal. 5:24-25).

So when we open our hearts to let Jesus be Lord of our life, the Holy Spirit works within us to help us put away the things of the flesh, so that we might live according to the ways of Jesus. And we have to continually seek the help of the Holy Spirit in order to continue on in our lives with the Lord Jesus.

“When you leave church [after worship], you go to your car and make your way home or out to dinner. You will deplete the reserve of gas in the tank of your car. You don’t have to be a bad person

for your car to go from full to empty. You just have to use the car. If you drive, I can guarantee you, you will deplete gasoline (unless you have an electric car. Then you will deplete the level of electricity in your car.)

“Many times, when people leave church, they are spiritually full because of the time they spent singing praises to God and hearing His Word. However, within two hours of being filled, their spiritual tank will begin to dissipate. All a person has to do to lose their “filling” is to live life. Life has its way of draining out the reality of the Holy Spirit in you.

“Just like a person who drives a car has to continue to make trips to the filling station to fill up and make the car run smoothly, Christians must continue to be filled with the Holy Spirit.”³

The world sucks out our spirituality and makes us lose our abundant life. As we live among those who live according to the ways of the world, our lives must continue to be filled with the Holy Spirit so that we can live as followers of Jesus. Only then can we live in such a way that is different than the world, so that those around us can see the difference that Jesus makes in us. As the Holy Spirit continues to fill us, we can stand strong against the ways of the flesh and live for the Lord. And people will see the difference.

“One time I was trapped on an elevator. The immediate reaction of all of the people was panic. We were trapped, stuck, and couldn’t get out. Some people were crying, ‘Help! Help! Help!’ Were we sincerely crying out? Yes! Were we begging for help? Yes! But it wasn’t working.

“Other folks were banging on the door. Bam, bam, bam! No one was hearing all that noise, but those folks didn’t care. They kept right on banging. Desperate people do desperate things. They were crying out.

“There was one calm man on the elevator. I simply walked to the other side, pulled out a latch, picked up the telephone, and waited.

“A voice said, ‘Is there a problem?’ I said, ‘We’re trapped on the elevator between this floor and

³ (Tony Evans, *Tony Evans Book of Illustrations*, pg. 150-151, #453)

this floor. Can we get some help?’ They responded, ‘We’ll be right there.’

“See, everybody forgot about the phone. We were so into being trapped that we forgot there was a phone link to the security department. Merely by picking up the phone, we were released from our hostage situation. All the human effort we put forth, banging and yelling, wouldn’t work, but picking up the phone and asking for help did. We had to seek help using the connection that was available.”⁴

The Holy Spirit is our connection to the help of the Lord. Instead of relying upon the ways of the flesh to give us life and help us to find joy and hope and love, we have to turn to the Lord Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, who connects us to the resources we need to really have abundant life.

On our own we can do nothing to provide for ourselves. When we find ourselves in a jam, or when life turns up-side-down, or the bottom drops out from under us, instead of relying upon the things of the flesh to satisfy us, we need a greater power to find life. When we connect to the Lord our God through the Holy Spirit, we find life, not death; we find love, not selfishness; we find hope, not disappointment; we find compassion and not contempt. The Holy Spirit grants us the things of God, which leads us to much greater things.

The Holy Spirit is vital for us to stay connected to the Lord our God. When we open our lives to let Him lead us, we are continually filled by Him to keep going in our faith journey so that we might glorify God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let’s pray

Father, thank You for giving us the lives we have. Thank You for allowing us to live as Your witnesses. Give us the courage today to give our lives over to the Lord Jesus Christ, so that He might transform us and remold us back into Your image.

But Lord, we are distracted so much by the things of this world, and we are led astray in chasing after all those things. Help us to see that they only lead us to death rather than to life. Help us to understand our need for You to guide us and lead us out of the ways of this world through the work of the Holy Spirit. Give us the courage to let Him live in us and through us so that we might live as Your witnesses in all that we do and say. This we pray in Jesus’ Name. AMEN.

⁴ (Tony Evans, *Tony Evans’ Book of Illustrations*, pg. 149, #450)