5-13-18

Ephesians 1:13-14 (2)

Last week, in looking at these verses, we considered the Holy Spirit and His role in God’s work. Along with the Father and the Son, He does His part in our salvation and sanctification; in bringing God’s people to Him. The Holy Spirit works in the entire world, but in particular, He works in the church. He takes up residence in each one of us who have accepted Jesus as our Saviour. Consider that sometime: The Almighty God of all actually lives within each of us who are His children; He works with our hearts and minds to further His plans and prepare us for eternity with Him.

He dwells within us, Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 6:19 that we are a temple of the Holy Spirit. Think about what a temple is: It is a holy place and it is a place to worship God. Likewise, we are to be holy, and we are to worship God. The wonderous thing about the Holy Spirit indwelling us is that He helps us in both of these areas. With the good gift of the Holy Spirit, we must also be careful; once given, He won’t leave us, so when we sin it brings Him sorrow and grief. We must try to avoid causing sorrow for the Holy Spirit of God who has nothing but our best interest in mind.

As we have already mentioned, the Holy Spirit was active throughout the Old Testament in giving life and speaking the word of God through the prophets. He empowered people with courage, strength, wisdom, or special skills in order to fulfil the plans of God. In the New Testament, He empowered Jesus with all the supernatural gifts of the Spirit and enabled Him to complete His ministry. The Holy Spirit empowered the first Christians and He continues today. When we speak the Gospel, He is the strength and conviction behind the words. He prepares hearts to hear the Gospel and gives the faith necessary to believe in Jesus Christ as Saviour.

He seals Christians so that all the forces that exist know that we belong to God. He strengthens our spirit so that we know we are His. The Holy Spirit continually works within us to make us more like Jesus. Now let’s consider some additional things the Holy Spirit does.

Titus 3:5

He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.

Once again, Paul reminds us of the Gospel. God saved us through Jesus Christ. His work on the cross satisfied God’s justice on our behalf. By ourselves, we are not acceptable to God because of our sin. Because of the blood of Christ, we can be cleansed of our sin and given His righteousness. We have done nothing to deserve this work of Christ, but God has provided it because He is merciful. Once we have accepted the atoning work of Jesus, then the Holy Spirit begins His cleansing work.

This work of the Holy Spirit is purification. It is one of those Christian concepts that we have right now, but not yet. As soon as we accept Jesus, we are saved. If we would die at that moment, we would spend eternity with Jesus. But as long as we live in our bodies, we need to be cleaned up. Our carnal desires are still at work, our minds are still focused on the things of the world. The Holy Spirit works on us for the rest of our lives to help us overcome our carnal desires and focus our minds on spiritual matters. Obviously, this work is mostly regarding our minds; as Paul tells us in Romans 12:2, we need to be receptive to the renewing of our minds.

In the passage from Titus, this is the renewing done by the Holy Spirit. The other word applied to the Holy Spirit’s work is regeneration. This is the spiritual rebirth we under go when we are born again in accepting Jesus. Our spirits, which were separated from God by sin, are now made alive again in union with God through Jesus. Here again is where the Holy Spirit gives life; He gives life to our spirit. This verse from Titus ends with “*washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit*”. So, our spirits are regenerated, or born again, and throughout our lives we undergo the process of renewing. In this way, we are washed; we are purified.

Our awesome God, is a God who choses to reveal Himself. He wants people to know about Him and know about His plans. He is not some deity who started events rolling in the universe and then hides beyond where we can see Him. He is very present and He wants His people to know He is there. Occasionally the Father has revealed Himself physically, perhaps in fire and smoke, or in a cloud, or in a gentle breeze. Sometimes He has audibly spoken as when He gave His commandments in thunder or when He expressed His pleasure in His only begotten Son.

The ultimate revelation of God is in Jesus Christ. By the very act of Jesus becoming a man and going through what He did while on earth, He showed how much God loves us. By His life, we were able to see how God is, the way He deals with things. We are able to learn about the divine nature of God in the human-being that is Jesus.

But constantly and throughout history, God has brought about His revelation through the Holy Spirit. All that was spoken by the Old Testament prophets was brought to them by the Holy Spirit. As we read in John 16:13, the apostles were guided into all truth by the Holy Spirit. All of the Bible was written under His direction as we learn from 2 Timothy 3:16: “*All Scripture is inspired by God*.”

The Holy Spirit reveals His own presence, and thereby God’s presence, in different ways. In Numbers 11:25-26, we read of a time when Moses gathered 70 elders of Israel around the tent of meeting and the Holy Spirit manifested His presence when they all began prophesying. This only happened to these men the one time. When the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus, it was in the form of a dove and at Pentecost He manifested as the sound of rushing wind and with tongues as of flame. He is revealed within us when we are able to cry out “Abba, Father” and when He calls to our minds Scripture that helps guide our lives.

In the category of revelation, the Holy Spirit will sometimes create an atmosphere where we can actually sense His presences. This can happen when we are by ourselves or while in a group of Christians. He can create an atmosphere of holiness and power during prayer. It is not power or holiness of our own, but it is His as He brings our prayers to the Father and we feel them being lifted up before the throne. At times He brings conviction of sin; this is not a guilt to overwhelm us, but a realization that we have gone against the One who loves us more than anyone else. It is a call to repentance and to turn to Jesus, rather than away from Him.

He will impart truth and wisdom to us, bringing a sudden understanding of Scripture. He can provide that peace and comfort we need to deal with life. This is that peace that passes understanding; that we, as Christians, can feel peace when anyone else in the world would be panicked or distraught is a revealing of God. And it shows His compassion on His children. Sometimes when we sing to God, we feel that presence. Somehow, we know that our praises and worship are being lifted up to heaven and being presented to God.

Revelation by the Holy Spirit involves teaching and illumination, it involves calling things to mind. Jesus made this promise to the apostles.

John 14:26

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

This promise was made directly to the apostles; they heard Jesus preach for over three years without taking any notes, but Jesus promised them that the Holy Spirit would help them to remember. They would remember so they could teach, but more importantly for us, so that they could write Jesus’ teaching down for us. The Holy Spirit would also give them direct understanding of Jesus’ words and even reveal parts of the future to them. By the Holy Spirit, they wrote all these things down accurately for our benefit.

We can claim this same promise in a slightly modified form. We are not going to receive anything new that is not already in Scripture. This was strictly for the prophets and for the apostles. But when we study Scripture, the Holy Spirit will call it to mind for us when we need it. He also continues to give understanding of what is written. Through Scripture, the Holy Spirit continues to reveal the deeper things of God. As time goes on and certain occurrences take place in the world, holy Scripture becomes clear to us when it was not before.

One of the most wonderful illuminations Christians receive is the difference between the Kingdom of God and of the world.

1 Corinthians 2:12

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God.

Because of having the Holy Spirit, Christians can look at the world and see how messed up it is. And, more importantly, we know why; it is because the world has rejected God. We watch as people try desperately to fix things in their own strength, and also, with their own motives. We watch as things get worse and worse. Now certainly, we are not called to simply watch, we are called to do. What are we called to do? Pray, spread the Gospel, and do the good works that God has for us to do.

The Holy Spirit helps us to pray; He guides us in prayer according to the will of God and intercedes for us. He helps us to spread the Gospel. He prepares hearts ahead of time to receive it, strengthens us to present it, and gives the necessary power to the words we speak to make them effective. He also brings us to the good works that God has for us. He prepares us for them and strengthens us to do them. We cannot have the spirit of the world and the Spirit of God working together within us. They are opposed to each other; we must choose which master to serve.

Another thing the Holy Spirit does is bring unity. This is primarily known as the church; The Christian church throughout the world. We are unified in the Spirit, we worship God the Father, we are saved through God the Son. God the Holy Spirit is working constantly to bring together all the children of God in love through Jesus Christ.

The obvious question becomes: Why is there such disunity among the church? The answer is: Because it has people in it. We are fallen and we are subject to sin while we live in this world. But the time will come, in the Kingdom of God, that sin will be gone and there will be complete unity in Christ. But the Holy Spirit does help us now, which is why it is so important for us to be aware of His work and avoid being a hinderance to Him.

First off, we are called to love each other and to bear with each other. This means overlooking small sins against us. This means that sometimes personalities clash with each other and so, we decide that we simply won’t let it become a problem. It involves a lot of understanding, patience, wisdom, tolerance, and love; in other words, the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Each of us are given special gifts by the Holy Spirit. Our task is to use these gifts for the upbuilding of the church. We all fit together with our gifts so that our church is pleasing to God. Unity is here in this church and in all the church throughout the world because it is powered by the Holy Spirit, by God Himself. May it always be our own desire to be usable by Him in maintaining this unity.

Prayer

Saviour Jesus, You have asked the Father and He has sent the Holy Spirit to all of us who have accepted Your work upon the cross. You tell us in Your word that it was good for You to leave so that the Holy Spirit could come to us. So, now we thank You for sending Him.

Holy Spirit, we are so grateful for Your presence here among us and within us. By Your inspiration, we can understand the word of God in Scripture. By Your guidance, we can discern the will of the Father. But we are weak, we try to depend on our own minds too many times. Be patient with us and teach us to follow Your leading.

Holy Spirit, lift our prayers before the throne. Intercede for us that they may be a sweet incense before the Father. Give guidance to this, Your church; fit us together so that we may form the body of Christ. Work in us to bring sanctification, bring us more into the likeness of Jesus our Lord.

In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray

Amen