

**THE IMPERFECT PRAYER LIFE AND THE DESIRE FOR COMMUNION WITH GOD - Part nine- Sunday, November 24<sup>th</sup> 2024 - 5:30 p.m.  
Pastor Don Horban, Cedarview Community Church, Newmarket, ON**

Today we study a very practical issue. How can you know when the Holy Spirit is at work in your heart? Last week we considered some of the ways in which we can ***grieve*** the Holy Spirit. But how can I ***sense*** His gracious, helping presence? What does the Holy Spirit ***do*** when He sets Himself to work in my person? Here are some important signs of His presence:

- 1) **THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL BRING A GROWING DISTRESS OVER THE CONDITION OF THE SINFUL WORLD OR A BACKSLIDDEN CHURCH**

**2 Corinthians 4:10 - "[We are] always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies."**

These are hard words. By "***carrying around in the body the death of Jesus,***" Paul does ***not*** mean he walked around with a sour, depressed attitude toward life. This is the same apostle who instructed Christians to "***rejoice in the Lord always***"(Philippians 4:4). Rather, Paul was describing the way the Holy Spirit produces an inward ***sympathy*** with the heart of Jesus.

Perhaps we should say it this way. The Holy Spirit, while gentle like a dove, removes the easy **tolerance** toward things that grieve the heart of our Creator God. While always **loving** toward **people**, He removes the **indifference** toward **sin**.

We saw the same idea last week in **Romans 8:26-27** - “**Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. [27] And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.**”

The Holy Spirit **burdens** the heart of the intercessor. He **shapes** our thoughts and prayers in the direction of God’s will rather than the popular opinions and tastes of this world. He establishes an **inward conflict**, as we’ll see later in this study. Especially, the one praying can’t be trite or glib in the face of a world that may profess religious loyalty to **God** but rejects **Jesus Christ**, God the Son.

No one possessed the Spirit in greater measure than Jesus - **John 3:34** - “**For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure.**” And yet nobody was more broken over the plight and doom of sinners than Jesus. That is always the way the Holy Spirit works.

2) **THE HOLY SPIRIT SETS CHRISTIANS AT ODDS WITH THE WORLD**

**2 Timothy 3:12 - "Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted...."**

Perhaps Jesus said it best - **John 15:18 - "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you."** Or, **John 15:24 - "If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father.**

The same thought is also expressed in **John 17:14 - "I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world."** It is the Holy Spirit who produces the likeness of Jesus in our hearts. That means it's automatic that He also produces a ***distance between our new natures and the course of this world.***

3) **THE HOLY SPIRIT BRINGS A FRESHLY REALIZED INWARD CONFLICT WITH SATAN**

**Ephesians 6:10-11 - "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. [11] Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil."**

The nature of this conflict is ***inward***. Paul places the battle in the realm of our ***thought life***. The place the Holy Spirit brings victory is the ***mental life*** of the Christian. The Holy Spirit exposes thought patterns as "***schemes***"(11) that most of the world just considers normal mental processes. This is ***key*** in understanding Paul's meaning in this great passage.

The Holy Spirit exposes deceptions ***before*** they produce outward bondage in our ***actions***. He leads us away from temptation ***before*** we are caught in what the Psalmist called the "***snare***" of iniquity. This is the kind of spiritual warfare the Holy Spirit leads Christians through.

The point here is **only** the Holy Spirit creates this conflict with the Devil. The masses of the world are numb to the kind of deception they are under - **Ephesians 2:1-3** - “**And you were dead in the trespasses and sins [2] in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— [3] among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.**”

The world, totally under the dominion of Satan, does not **feel** his influence. They are **bound** but **unaware**. Only those who learn to walk in the Spirit **sense** the opposition of the enemy. It's much like walking in a strong wind. Only those who are walking **into** the wind know how hard it's blowing.

It's important to remember there is nothing sinful about sensing the opposition of the Devil. That is nothing to be gloomy or depressed about. For the sincere child of God, it's the first step to victory.

#### 4) **THE HOLY SPIRIT BRINGS A DEEPER SENSE OF CONFLICT WITH SELF**

**Galatians 5:17 - "For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do."**

This is not the same as conflict with ***Satan***. This is the battle we face with the pull of the world on ***our own desires***. And the Holy Spirit, if given any space in the life at all, will bring a ***growing distaste for personal sin***. This doesn't always occur at the same pace in every life. Some find ***immediate victory*** over the most binding habits of the old life. Others walk in a ***more gradual path*** of renewal and growth.

But the main point is the Holy Spirit is not given simply to make us ***feel*** happy and blessed. He will get us there eventually, but His first priority is to make us ***holy***. And a struggle with the desires of self - even a ***painful*** struggle - is usually part of that perfecting process. Remember, a struggle with sin is not necessarily a sign that the Spirit is not present. In fact, ***creating*** those struggles is part of His job.

I think there is much confusion at this point. A **conflict with selfish desires isn't** the same as **condemnation for sin**. Consider **Romans 8:1-2 - "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. [2] For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death."**

Every word in the following explanation is important. This verse does ***not*** teach that we are instantly delivered from any ***struggle with sin***. What we are immediately delivered from is the ***condemnation of the law***. This is what makes freedom and growth in actual holiness a possibility. We are now free to pursue holiness in the ***inward power of the Spirit*** without living in fear of the ***external scolding and condemnation of the broken law***. It is ***love for Jesus, not personal condemnation***, that motivates our ***hatred of our own sin***.

**Romans 7** does not instantly disappear with the coming of **Romans 8**. The Christian will probably experience ***both*** to some degree. The Spirit first ***sets up the struggle with sin (Romans 7)***, then He ***leads into truth and freedom in Christ (Romans 8)***.

5) **THE HOLY SPIRIT BRINGS A DEEPER AWARENESS OF THE PEACE WE HAVE WITH GOD**

**Romans 5:1, 5** - "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ....[5] and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."

The context of these verses makes clear what it is the Holy Spirit **"pours into our hearts"** in verse 5. He brings an **awareness of the love God has for us**. This in no way contradicts what we said in the previous points. With the working of the Holy Spirit there **is** a greater conflict with **Satan and the world**. There **is** a greater conflict with the **self-life**. But at the same time, I will never be more certain that God is fully behind me as I seek to walk uprightly before Him, in the power of His Blessed Spirit.