

## Jesus On The Holy Spirit

Christ's Teaching on the Spirit of God

Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Given 05-Mar-05; Sermon #708

Last time, a month ago today, we studied what the Holy Spirit does. That was also the name of the sermon. And, I did it through concrete examples from the Old Testament. I did this purposefully because I wanted to show how the Holy Spirit acts—behaves—what it does in a way that we all could understand from concrete examples, in things that we could imagine in our mind's eye and see.

And so, we saw the Holy Spirit in Genesis 1:2—the second verse of the entire Bible—we saw it waiting expectantly for God's command to do His creative work. Remember I said that the imagery there was of a bird fluttering, or flitting about, just waiting for God to give it the command to do something.

We saw it giving Joseph wisdom and discernment before Pharaoh. And not just in how he behaved but in what he said.

We saw it endowing Bezaleel with strength and skill, and ability to construct the tabernacle, and all the furniture in it.

We saw it opening Balaam's eyes to the truth, letting him see matters—Israel as God sees Israel, and thus he prophesied.

We saw the Holy Spirit setting Joshua apart as Moses' successor to lead Israel into the promised land, and to conquer the Canaanites.

We saw—maybe the most picturesque one—the Holy Spirit surging through Samson so that he was able to rip a young lion apart like a young goat. You can really see that in your mind's eye.

We saw it inspiring Jahaziel to say the right and fitting words to give Judah encouragement; and Jehoshaphat, too, as they were awaiting the onslaught of the Assyrian army.

We also finally saw that the Holy Spirit is the means by which we have fellowship with God and with each other. There was not an Old Testament example that I could think of that would do this. We saw that the Holy Spirit is the vital connection—the link—between us, meaning between us and God, and between us and each other. It is

Jesus on the Holy Spirit by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

the thing that binds us, and puts us in harmony, and makes us to think and speak the same thing, and do the same thing.

Now, these Old Testament examples help us to see the Spirit in action. And it gives us the sense, then, of what it can do for us, and in us as we need. When Jesus came, after the Old Testament was finished, He unlocked a great deal more understanding about God's Spirit. You could think of it this way, that He opened up our understanding of the Spirit just as He magnified the law. So, you could say something like: Just as He revealed the Spirit of the Law, He also revealed the spirit of God's Spirit.

In the Old Testament we saw the Spirit working in these people in a fairly physical way. Samson is a good example of this. The strength that it gave Samson allowed him to be strong physically, but in the New Testament, our understanding of what the Spirit can do if it surges through us takes on a more spiritual connotation. And, it can fill us with spiritual strength. And you know that God does not have all the church members around the world going about ripping lions apart. We do not knock down great big buildings to slay Philistines.

God gives us His Spirit not to perform physical acts like that, necessarily, but to do spiritual works. And just as God filled Samson with the Spirit to give him that strength, He will also fill us to do other acts of strength but in a spiritual realm. So, even though it is the same spirit in the Old Testament, and the New Testament, under the New Covenant the role of God's Spirit expands.

Today, I would like to survey specifically what Jesus said about the Holy Spirit. The title of my sermon is, "Jesus on the Holy Spirit." What Jesus says about the Holy Spirit during His ministry sets the tone for how the Spirit is understood throughout the rest of the New Testament.

If we wanted to we could compare what Jesus says with what Paul writes later, or Peter, or any of the other apostles. And because of this, this is how we should understand the Holy Spirit. And also, how all of Christianity should understand the Holy Spirit, but does not. Unfortunately, that understanding has been perverted through the use of philosophy and the reasoning of men into something that it is not.

Jesus is very clear about the Holy Spirit and how it works. And, if we understand what Jesus understood about the Holy Spirit, then we have a good chance of having the truth about the Holy Spirit, and not some strange idea of a three-people-in-one God. As David Grabbe was telling before services today, he said, "If you met somebody on the street who was three people in one, you would want to lock him up in a sanatorium!"

Jesus on the Holy Spirit by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

But, in religious circles, they think that this is normal!

Now Jesus shows very plainly that it is not so. God is not three-in-one. We will touch briefly on that a time or two a bit later.

Now, it is no surprise to most of you [in my audience] that most of Jesus' references are found in the book of John.

Please turn over to Matthew 10, verses 18 through 20. We came to this passage last time, but it is worth going over again to bridge the gap between the Old Testament, and the New Testament. This is when Jesus is preparing his disciples to send them out.

**Matthew 10:18-20** You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but *the Spirit of your Father* who speaks in you.

You probably know that the Spirit has been spoken about or written about before in the book of Matthew. Here we are already in chapter 10. But, believe it or not, this is the first time that *Jesus* speaks about the Holy Spirit in the book. The other times it had been used, for instance in chapter 1, that Mary conceived of the Holy Spirit. Jesus did not say anything here. So, I did not use that as an example.

What we are going through here, today, is those things that Jesus says about the work of the Spirit. I want to be clear about that. That is my focus today.

Now, first off, the first thing I want you to see here in verse 20 is that Jesus said, and it is a first mention of the Spirit, is that it is, "the Spirit of your Father." He does not call it just "the Spirit," but He calls it, "the Spirit of your Father."

This is another one of those first mentions in the Bible. He makes sure that He talks about it in terms of it being possessed by God. It is something that God gives. It is not some other force. It is something that is of God the Father.

So, this is interesting in light of the first mention in the Old Testament where it is, "the Spirit of God." Here it is just slightly different, "the Spirit of your Father."

On this occasion, Jesus ascribes to the Spirit a function that the disciples were familiar

Jesus on the Holy Spirit by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

with because it was something that had been done frequently in the Old Testament. That is, the Spirit inspires a person to speak God's words. The prophets all experienced this. And many have experienced it just as Jesus describes here, under duress, before authorities with their lives on the line.

He uses the term "testimony" in verse 18. What He is speaking about are His disciples making a witness before authorities, before the world. As He says here before governors, and kings, and to the Gentiles, meaning basically unbelievers—the heathen—the ones who have another belief system.

What the Spirit would inspire them to do and to say in those situations would impress these people one way or another, or it would give them a witness against them, meaning, what would be said during these times should convict the people, but if they are not convicted by what is said and done at that time, then it becomes evidence against them, that they rejected this.

And so, the Spirit is very involved in doing this, in prodding us and inspiring us to say what needs to be said during these times.

Turn to Matthew 12, verses 24 through 28. Jesus has just cast out a demon in verse 22. The multitudes were amazed in verse 23, and now verse 24:

**Matthew 12:24-28** Now when the Pharisees heard *it* they said, "This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons. But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God [*the spirit of God*], surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Now, just another note, just to impress the point upon you, he says, "the Spirit of God." That is the power by which He can cast out demons. It is not a third person of a so-called trinity, but God's Spirit that God possesses. It is God's. It comes from God, and it does God's work. It is wholly possessed by God. It is part of God himself. It is not another person of God, or a part of a person who is God—well, maybe I got myself confused by all that—that is what the trinity will do to you. It is confusing. But, the Spirit is what God uses to do whatever it is that He wants to do.

Jesus on the Holy Spirit by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

Now, it says here that the Spirit gives Jesus power to cast out demons. It is God's power over demons. And it is a power that Satan and all the demons cannot refuse. It is the same power that created them, and they must obey it.

So, remember the Spirit acts as God commands, and it will not return to Him void. So, when it goes out from God to do a work, it is going to do it.

As I said, the demons cannot refuse it. If God sends His Spirit through anyone to cast out a demon, that demon must leave because it is God's Spirit empowering it to be done. The demon must obey.

Now remember this basic fact which we got out of Genesis 1:2 that the Spirit—God's Spirit—is the means by which He does His work. We can split out different types of God's work.

We can say that God's work is creation.

We can say that God's work is redemption.

We can say that God's work is salvation.

We can say that God's work is governance.

And there are many more things that we can say are God's work. But, every single one of them are done by the agency of God's Spirit, because God's Spirit is the power by which He acts.

So, let us pull this back into this particular scenario in Matthew 12.

Freeing a person of the bondage of demons is a work of God. It is a part of the work of redemption and salvation, and governance aspects of God's work, and many others besides. The Spirit plays a key role in doing this whether it is demon possession, demon influence, or just general enslavement to Satan and his way of life. The Spirit is central in casting Satan out.

What I am trying to get at here is that we look at this as just stark demon possession. However, the same process works to free somebody who is just being influenced by a demon, or to free everyone of us from the bondage we have to Satan because we have grown up in this world. It is the same power that works to cast out a demon from a person to free us from Satan's grip.

So, God's Spirit is the power by which Satan and his demons are rejected (first of all), resisted (once they are gone), and ultimately defeated. This is what Jesus is getting at here. He says that the work that He does is by God's Spirit. And it will do any of these things to rid a person (and eventually the entire world) from Satan's grasp. That is how powerful and necessary that the Spirit is.

The next mention is a couple of verses down in verse 31, and notice the first word:

**Matthew 12:31-32** Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy *against* the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.

Alright, I want to go to the book of Mark, and read a similar passage. Turn to chapter 3, verses 28 through 30:

**Mark 3:28-30** Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation—because they said (the Pharisees), "He has an unclean spirit."

This gives us a clue about the unpardonable sin. This is what we have to work with, basically. We could also pull from Hebrews 6 and Hebrews 10 on this subject.

But, many people have a difficulty understanding what the unpardonable sin is, especially if they look at it strictly from only these two verses regarding blaspheming the Holy Spirit. This is not the entire picture of it. There is more to it. Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong did a whole sizeable booklet just on this subject, "Just What Do You Mean...The Unpardonable Sin?"

The first thing we have to notice, here, is the *therefore* back there in Matthew 12:31 because what Jesus is doing is He is reaching a conclusion in His teaching vignette that actually began back in verse 14 because it says there that the Pharisees then went out and took counsel against Him about how they might destroy Him.

Jesus on the Holy Spirit by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

And then, Matthew has an interlude, here, where he quotes from Isaiah and brings in a prophecy. Then, the story picks up in verse 22 when Jesus cast out the demon; the people are amazed in verse 23; and in verse 24 the Pharisees accuse Him of casting out demons by Beelzebub—Satan himself. This is basically saying, though, that He has a demon, as it said in Mark, that he had an unclean spirit.

What He says here, in verse 31, is that their accusation against Him—Jesus the Son of Man—was indeed blasphemy, but He said that could be forgiven them.

One of the ways that you might want to look at this is that He did not say "the Son of God," but rather, "the Son of Man." This is how many people look at it. In this particular case, because He was yet human a blasphemy against Him in His human form could be forgiven because of the nature of the people's understanding (or lack thereof) of who He was. They could be confused about it, but what He is getting at here is that the Pharisees were deliberate, and knew what they were doing. They were intentionally blaspheming not just him, but the works that He did by God's Spirit.

This is where it began to get serious, this blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. They were not blaspheming His person, as a human, they were going beyond that and actually blaspheming the very character of God and His power to work good, which is all that He does.

Now, maybe some of us are unclear about what blasphemy is. We probably understand it in a general sense. Here are a couple of definitions: "**Intentional** indignity offered to God or to sacred things." This is a deliberate type of thing. Another one is: "Injurious or evil speaking against God."

Injurious means that the person's intent is to do harm, to harm God's character, and cast aspersions upon it.

Hebrews 10:29 is important in this regard. There is one phrase that is very important to understanding what Jesus was getting at, and that is at the very end of the verse where it says:

**Hebrews 10:29b** ...and insulted (KJV, "doing despite to") the Spirit of grace...

What Paul is getting at here is, according to the context, that it is deliberately and willfully rejecting of the mercy and power of God in the face of all evidence. It is spitting

in the face of God.

God is offering salvation, freely, and showing all the benefits, and giving all the promises, and asking very little in return; but the person rejects this and spits on the offering which in effect is spitting upon the very sacrifice of Jesus Christ. As it is shown here, Jesus Christ will not be offered twice on someone's behalf. It was done once for all.

So, back in Matthew 12, the Pharisees were very close to this point of committing blasphemy against the Holy Spirit because in their spirit of murder and envy, they were deliberately accusing Jesus of being in league with Satan. That is, accusing Jesus of using Satan's demonic power, rather than seeing the truth, mercy, and the Divine Power in Jesus' teaching, and miracles.

They deliberately turned a blind eye to Jesus' work, and the obvious source of it—they could see the fruits—people were being healed and demons cast out. Was that not what Jesus said to John the Baptist when John's disciples came and asked Jesus, "Are you the One, or should we look for another?" And Christ said, "Look at the fruits of the ministry."

It was very plain to the disciples of John the Baptist, and anyone else with an open mind, that what Jesus was doing was good. He was the Good Teacher of Israel. He is the One that came with total love to save the world. But these Pharisees from verse 14 onward had set themselves on a road to deliberately hide the truth, deliberately call good things evil even though all the evidence was pointing in the opposite direction.

What did Jesus tell Nicodemus, a Pharisee? Do you remember? He said, "You are a teacher of Israel, you should know these things." These people were not ignorant of God's way. They spent their whole lifetimes studying this. They should have known better. And do you know what? They did know better! But they willfully and deliberately rejected it because they had other plans—because Jesus was coming in and upsetting their apple cart.

And this Jesus calls blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. They were bringing into evil repute a work of God done by His Holy Spirit. They were saying that God's work was demonic! They were calling good "evil."

What this gets to is what Paul brings out in Hebrews 6 and Hebrews 12, that once a person understands the truth, tastes the heavenly gifts, as it were, and then willfully rejects it, there is no sacrifice for those sins. It is unpardonable. Jesus will not be freshly

crucified for them.

Now, He does not necessarily say here that the Pharisees had actually committed the unpardonable sin, but that they were very close—they were in danger of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit, in danger of eternal damnation or condemnation. They were right on the edge, and He was warning them. "It is okay if you speak against Me; this can be forgiven you out of your ignorance, but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit—trying to characterize God's loving work through His Spirit as something else than what it is, as evil—there can be no forgiveness for this."

It is a difficult concept, however it comes down to a person so hardening his heart against God that there can be no repentance. And, if there is no repentance there can be no forgiveness, because God leads to repentance, and then He forgives, but if a person will not be lead by God's Spirit, then there is no hope.

So, if you want a very succinct understanding of what the unpardonable sin is, it is "willfully denying and rejecting God's power, mercy, and love to save." At that point, one's heart is hardened to such a point that it could never be softened again.

Turn to Luke 4, verses 16 through 21.

**Luke 4:16-21** So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD. Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

He mentions the Spirit of the Lord, there, in verse 18. Notice again that it is, "the Spirit of the Lord." It is not an entity in itself. It is the Lord's Spirit by which the Lord does the work.

Now, what did the Lord use the Spirit to do here, both in the prophecy, as well as in the fulfillment in Jesus Christ's ministry? All of these things were known from Old Testament

Jesus on the Holy Spirit by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

times because He pulled this directly out of Isaiah 61. These are things that the disciples should have known. And we should know too because saw most of them in the last sermon!

I have five things here that He shows that the Holy Spirit does (based on Luke 4 above quoting Isaiah 61). We can look as these maybe as Jesus' way, or the writer's way, of bringing us up to speed in the New Testament. These are things we have already gone over.

1. The Holy Spirit anoints or sets apart.
2. It inspires the preaching of the Gospel.
3. It provides the power to heal—physically and spiritually, leaning toward the spiritual here. It will do both.
4. It liberates those who are enslaved and oppressed. It frees us from bondage.
5. It opens the eyes to the truth.

From what we see in verse 21, this was all seen in the ministry of Jesus Christ. He was a living example of all these things that the Spirit can and will do.

We can say, then, that the Spirit of God empowered Him to do all these things. And He did. This was right at the beginning of His ministry, right after His temptation, and He laid it out right there to the people of Nazareth, "I am fulfilling this prophecy, and I am going to do it by God's Spirit; and this is what I am going to do." They probably already knew this by heart.

Believe it or not, that is the extent of Christ's teaching on the Holy Spirit found in the Synoptic Gospels. There are a few more mentions, but they are either very similar to what I have presented already, or they are after His resurrection, and I do not want to get into those until after we look into the Passover discourse to the disciples.

But that is it. We looked into only our places where the Spirit is mentioned by Christ in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Amazing is it not? But wait until we get into the book of John!

Turn to John 3. There is a mention before this, and is found in all four gospels, which is the Spirit's work in Jesus' baptism. But, I did not go there because there is not any teaching there. It just mentions that the Spirit came down upon Him like a dove, or came upon Him at that time.

I will mention this that it is intriguing that it came down to Him and settled down upon

Jesus on the Holy Spirit by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

Him like a dove. What does that make you think of? Refer back to last month's sermon. Genesis 1:2 and the imagery there is of the Spirit of God flitting like a bird, hovering over the face of the deep. The Hebrew word is a word picture for the activity of a bird, restless, flying here and there, waiting to do what it does.

When we are introduced to the Spirit in the New Testament, we see the Holy Spirit coming down upon Him like a dove. And I just wonder if God wanted us to think back to Genesis 1:2 to understand that the same Spirit that worked the creation was now working in this one Being to begin His spiritual creation with gusto.

This is where it all begins—whoosh!—and Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit. And, He immediately went out and did the work. It is the same imagery in both places.

It is interesting, and I am not sure if that is what it means, however it appears to me that they seem to go together. They are both at the very beginning of their respective portions in John and Genesis. Many people think that the real beginning of the New Testament is John 1:1, rather than Matthew 1:1, and so in a similar way, that would be the same, right off the bat, the Holy Spirit is mentioned in this bird form.

We get to John 3, and by this time, we are into something pretty deep about the Holy Spirit. Here, Nicodemus has come in furtively to see Jesus:

**John 3:3-8** Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Of course, this is the teaching on becoming born again. And, once again we see that what Jesus says here that the Holy Spirit plays a major role in this transformation.

Notice that in verse 3 Jesus speaks of being able to "see" the Kingdom of God. I get the implication that one is far away, and is looking, and can see the Kingdom of God in the distance. This is how it strikes me.

In any case, it is clear that we can see the Kingdom of God while still in the flesh, but to inherit the Kingdom of God in its fullness we must wait until we are changed into Spirit. All along the way God's Holy Spirit is intimately involved. That is how important the Spirit is.

From the very beginnings of our first contact with God, the Spirit of God is involved. And it stays with us and eventually stays within us all the way through; and do you know what? Once it begins it never stops helping us—ever, ever!

What do you think we are going to be composed of when we inherit God's Kingdom? That same Spirit! So once John 6:44 begins, God the Father sends out His Spirit and it begins working with our minds drawing us to Christ, the Spirit never leaves. It is always active, waiting for it to be used, waiting for God to give it a command to work.

Once we accept it, once we go forward with it, and once the conversion process gets going and continues, it is there, always. This is how vital the Holy Spirit is to us and to the purpose that God is working out in us. It is central. It is very important to understand the work of the Spirit because it is the work of God in us. It does the work of God in us. Without the Spirit there is no work of God being done in us.

Let us look at this from the point of John 6:44. The Spirit works with us and once we accept Jesus Christ and the salvation that He gives us, then God gives us His Spirit and it lives in us. Now, it is not just there passive in us. It is always working. It is giving us gifts, it is providing motivation, it is endowing us with strength, it is giving us inspiration, and it is allowing us to communicate with God.

Of course, it also gives us fellowship with one another. It binds us together. I could go on and on with the things that the Spirit does. It is constantly working to transform us. Is not that what Romans 12:1-2 says? We have to become living sacrifices so that we will be transformed, not conformed to this world, but transformed into what Jesus Christ is. It is the power of the Holy Spirit that gets that done throughout our entire conversion.

God's Spirit transforms us from lowly, sinful humans into exalted, glorious, righteous sons and daughters of God. And God's Spirit is with us and in us every step of the way.

Now, the primary teaching here that Jesus was trying to get across to Nicodemus, to put it at his level was that entrance into the Kingdom of God is a process much like birth. That is putting it on its most basic level, and this is what He wanted to get at.

Nicodemus caught part of it, but he could not understand the mechanics of it because

Jesus on the Holy Spirit by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

he was still thinking in Old Testament mode in terms of the Spirit. This is why Jesus had to tell him that the work of the Spirit is invisible. It is like the wind. It blows and you can see its effects, but you cannot see the wind. He is telling Nicodemus that this process of birth into the Kingdom of God is something that takes place invisibly within a person. You can see the effects, but you cannot see the actual means that it happens. You can see what it does; you just do not see the workings.

Here is a simple illustration: You see the hands of the clock working, and it tells you the time. But you do not see the mechanisms inside working all the wheels to make the hands move at the proper speed. It is the same with the work of the Holy Spirit. It is working inside of us with our minds, with our own spirit, and we can see the fruits of it on the outside because of service, or kind words, or whatever it is that we do that mimic the works of God.

But, we do not actually see the Spirit working inside of us. We only see the effects—the fruits. That is why Jesus said that you judge them by their fruits. This is why there are fruits of the spirit. We can see the love, the joy, the peace, patience, etc., all the way down to self control. That is what we see. That is what Nicodemus could not see. He did not put them together because he was thinking about things in a physical way. He wanted to return to his mother's womb. Jesus was saying, "No, no, no, no, no...that is not the way of it. It is something much more spiritual and invisible."

Just as there is conception, gestation, and parturition in a physical human birth, there are similar steps along the way to become fully born sons and daughters of God. But it is the Spirit that makes things work.

So, just as we underwent this physical process to be born as human beings, we must undergo a similar process to enter into God's Family. It is the Spirit that makes all of this possible.

Please turn to Romans 8. We will see a bit of additional information.

**Romans 8:14-15** For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

See? God has made us His sons by His spirit, and we are like little babes crying, "Daddy, Daddy, help! Help us to mature."

Jesus on the Holy Spirit by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

**Romans 8:16** The Spirit [itself] bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

That is the proof. God's Spirit working with our spirit is proof that we are children of God.

**Romans 8:17** ...and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

The Spirit will work in us and with us through whatever it is we need to go through, whether sufferings like Jesus Christ, or whether it be something somewhat less, but all the way to glorification.

This sort of spiritual transformation, of becoming a new creation, is the teaching that Jesus Christ was trying to get across to Nicodemus. And at the time Nicodemus could not comprehend it. If you would go and read all of John 3, it would be very informative to see where Jesus takes this. It is very interesting.

Please turn to John 4. I do not want to spend a lot of time here, because I went through this a couple of sermons ago. Jesus tells the woman at the well, verse 23:

**John 4:23-24** But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

Remember, worship is essentially our response to God. That is its essential foundational meaning. Jesus says here, that our response to Him, working in our lives, must be in kind. God works with us by His Spirit and we must respond to Him by the same Spirit. That is how we communicate with Him.

That is why we must worship in spirit and truth. God does not recognize any other response. It is like no connection is there if we respond to Him in any other way. You may look at it as we have to reflect God's work in us back to Him.

For instance, in prayer, God wants to hear us "parroting" back to Him what He has taught us. See? We receive things from Him because we ask things according to His will. He has told us already that He will give this to us because we read it in His Word

Jesus on the Holy Spirit by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

that He gave us a promise to do whatever it is, and when we pray we ask Him for those same things that He has said that He would give us. By doing so, we are worshipping Him in spirit and in truth. We are on His wavelength.

So, when He works with us by His Spirit, we respond by His Spirit. Most of us do not know how to do this, but it is easy. We are looking at it in a much too difficult a way. All we have to do is to live God's way. That is worshipping in spirit and in truth. It is not difficult. It is not something we actually struggle to have to do because we are not aware of what it is. We struggle to do it because we are human. What we have to do is easy to understand. It is not easy sometimes to apply.

But, we respond to Him by doing what He says we should do and this is communicated to Him by His Spirit. And it is done in us by His Spirit.

The Spirit is so extensively involved in everything we do as Christians. It is the power that we can use that most of us do not tap into. Why is that? Because we are afraid, we are human, we are weak, and we have all kinds of pressures to go another direction. But, the Spirit is there with the power to help us do the right things if we would just give God a chance to use it in our behalf.

So, worship is not confined to Sabbath services, and it occurs during every waking moment. This is why Paul tells us in other parts of the New Testament that we have to live in the spirit. That is basically what it is. Worshipping God in spirit and truth is living in the Spirit.

Turn to Romans 8 again. Paul says in verse 1:

**Romans 8:1** There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

See? If you are living according to the truth of God under the power of God's Spirit there is no way that we are going to be condemned because we will not be breaking the law. The commandments will not be held over our heads because they will not come into play. There is no condemnation for those who live in the spirit, who are truly worshipping God in the Spirit.

**Romans 8:2** For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

Very simple! Live by the Spirit—no death! The law is not going to come down and convict you for anything because it has no reason to. It has not been broken. If you live according to the spirit you are a free person! And at the end of that line is eternal life.

**Romans 8:5** For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

We are thinking all the time. We have set our minds on the things of God, things that God's Spirit is motivating us to do, to say, to think about. We are in communion with God. We are in communication with God. We are on His wavelength not thinking about fleshly things, but things that God thinks about, doing things God does.

**Romans 8:8-9** So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you...

So, no excuses. You are not in the flesh anymore; you are in the spirit if you have got Christ's Spirit within you. No excuses.

**Romans 8:9-10** ...Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

The Spirit is life—meaning it is life to us. It is the essence of eternal life in us because we are living the right way. And if we keep that up, as it says in the next verse, you are going to be raised from the dead immortal just like Jesus was.

Back to John 6. This is at the end of Jesus' discourse where He is talking about eating His flesh and drinking His blood, and you know the consternation that would cause for people who were still thinking physically. Verse 60:

**John 6:60** Therefore many of *His disciples*, when they heard this, said, "This is a hard saying; who can understand it?"

Jesus on the Holy Spirit by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

"This is a difficult thing to grasp, Jesus. I am supposed to eat your flesh and drink your blood? That is the only way I am going to have eternal life? Blechh!"

Now listen to what Jesus says here:

**John 6:61-62** When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, "Does this offend you? What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before?"

"What if you saw Me changed into Spirit and rise up back to God right now?" Then He says:

**John 6:63** It is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.

Now what was He telling them? For many people this seems odd that He went in this direction. But they are not catching the links here. That is why it seems confusing to them that He goes off in this direction. His explanation in the vernacular is this: "He says, 'Do you think (verse 62) that seeing a miracle will enhance your belief? Do you think that if you saw this great miraculous ascension into heaven that that would make you believe?'"

Earlier they had asked Him for a sign and this is what prompted Him to say, "Look, Israel had manna for 40 years, but that miracle is nothing. I am the true Bread from heaven. Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you will not be raised. But, those who do will be raised." And so He says, "Do you think that a miracle is going to change your mind?"

The answer is no, because they had seen the miracle, and He fed 4,000 and 5,000, and all they wanted was more food. So He is saying here, "Get your mind off the fleshly and the physical. Not just the food, not just seeing the miracle, but get your mind off the physical interpretation of what I am saying too. You are all looking at this backwards! You are taking me literally and I do not mean it literally! You have to understand this spiritually from the standpoint of God's Spirit."

Thinking in terms of the flesh will get you nowhere. It will profit you nothing. You need to understand this spiritually. Eternal life comes through God's Spirit, helping you live as Christ instructs. (We are into verse 63 now...) He says, "It is the spiritual teaching—My

Jesus on the Holy Spirit by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

words—that will lead you to eternal life. You have to eat and drink My Word." That is what He was saying. He was The Word, and therefore, He could very well use the way of saying it, "Eat My flesh, and drink My blood," because He was the embodied Word of God. Everything God's Word was, He was.

But He was saying, "Do not look at it physically. That is just the way that I phrased it as an illustration. You have got to eat and drink my teaching and that will get you eternal life; that will put you into place to be raised from the dead. But, if you reject it, and you do not eat it and drink it, you are not going to get anywhere."

A Christian life is a life of constant imbibing of God's Word. This strikes against Protestantism totally as to their idea of eternal salvation. A person who comes to God and believes in the Son and accepts His sacrifice, and then does not continue to eat and drink Jesus Christ will die just like a person who refuses to take another sip of water or bite to eat.

So, the Protestants who preach that once saved, always saved—you do not need to do anything more, God is duty bound to give you eternal life—are dead wrong on the basis of John 6:63. They are dead. It is the same that James says. "Faith without works is dead." They are dead "Christians" unless they repent and eat Jesus Christ. Of course, they must have the truth as well.

The faith that they proclaim in which you do not have to do anything—no works, no obedience, no following everything Jesus Christ did—is absolutely dead. That is what James was also writing about.

I will go to one more. Turn to John 7.

**John 7:37-39** On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts [still the same theme, here], let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. [John's comment] But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive..."

Now, that is very interesting. You do not get the Spirit unless you believe in Him. And believing is a lot more than just saying, "I believe." Believing covers a great deal more ground, there is a great deal of obedience in believing. But, we will go on...

**John 7:39** ...for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet

Jesus on the Holy Spirit by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

glorified.

Meaning, that while He was yet on the earth, Jesus did the work of the Holy Spirit. And when Jesus was glorified, He sent His Spirit to do the same work. In fact, He tells His disciples that it is better that He send the Spirit from heaven because it was much more effective than He could be as one person on the earth.

What we just saw in John 7 is very similar to what we saw in John 6. He is talking about if you thirst, come to Me and drink, whereas He said that you have to eat My flesh and drink My blood in chapter 6. But the emphasis here is a bit different. The emphasis is on what we do with the Spirit once we have it.

Verse 37 talks about receiving it after coming to Him. But verse 38 tells us what happens if we use the Holy Spirit properly—out of his belly shall flow **rivers** of living water!

Do you understand what Jesus is telling us here? I cannot go into the water ceremony here and that would help, because it is a physical thing where you can see the water being dumped, and you could see the volume of water, and the work that it can do.

But, what Jesus is saying here is that the Spirit motivates us, or *can* motivate us if we are a willing receptacle, to **overflow** with godly behavior, service, encouragement, edification, inspiration, kindness, and whatever else it might be.

I think to most of us, and I include myself in this, God says, "I am going to give you the Spirit of God." And we said, "Ok! I am ready!" And we get it, and then we only give it a little bit of an opening to flow out.

We are like a sphincter muscle, and we have stopped it from doing its work. And Jesus says here that if you would go to Him and receive the Holy Spirit which He is willing to give, let it **flow** out of you like a river. Do not quench the Spirit as it says later on in Paul's writing. Let it move through you. Let God's power **work** as it is supposed to!

But, we tend to hold back. We tend to want to be as much as we are, and only let God's way inconvenience us a little bit. And so we hold back the flow, and Jesus says, "That is not what I mean by giving you the Spirit." It is supposed to flow through us. It is not supposed to be held up like some great treasure that we will not see again. God promises more, and more, and more. There is an unhindered flow behind us. All we have to do is open up wide and let the works of God happen in speech, thought, and

Jesus on the Holy Spirit by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

behavior. It can flow through us. It can happen in our lives if we allow it.

But most of the time our human nature makes us clamp down on it and stop it. I am not in any way saying that we should go around like Charismatics. That is not the proper expression of God's Spirit. That is foolishness. What I am talking about are the works of God like serving one another, saying kind things to one another, encouraging one another, helping where there is a need, giving teaching when necessary, and on and on it goes.

The whole Bible is full of examples of things we can do to allow the Spirit to flow. This is a good way to end the sermon because it is an uplifting thing to think of the fact that God is willing to give us this Spirit without measure, just as He gave it to His Son, if we are just willing to give ourselves totally to Him and what He is trying to do.

Let us end, then, in Acts 1.

**Acts 1:4-5** And being assembled together with them, He [the resurrected Jesus] commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father [the Spirit], "which," He said, "you have heard from Me [which He told us about and this sermon is about]; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

Think about that. This is where the teaching on baptism is important. John did not sprinkle them with a few drops of water, but he plunged them into the water until they were fully covered over and then he brought them back up. The idea of voluminous amounts is right there. "You will be baptized, totally immersed in the Holy Spirit. So, be ready for it."

**Acts 1:6-8** Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority [In a way He was saying, "No, not now."]. But [this is very important, it follows directly on I am not going to restore the Kingdom now but] you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Jesus on the Holy Spirit by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

That is why He baptized them with the Holy Spirit, so that they could go forward and be witnesses of Him all over the globe. We are among the select few who have received this power from God. Just a miniscule number of human beings have been immersed in the Holy Spirit like this. It is our obligation and our joy to use it to the glory of God.