Section: Doctrine of Salvation (Soteriology)

Wednesday, November 18, 2020

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**TEACHING NOTES**

**Q92. Is the Triune God united in providing salvation for the elect?**

Yes. Based on God having one eternal will, each of the three Persons carries out the same plan of salvation and judgment. God the Father chose the elect before the foundation of the world, Jesus died exclusively for those elect people, and the Holy Spirit only regenerates those same elect people.

**Part 9: Doctrine of the Holy Spirit (Pneumatology)**

**Q93. What is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and when does it happen?**

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the action by which God takes up permanent residence in the body of an elect person at regeneration.

Tonight, we conclude the catechism section we’ve been in- the *doctrine of Salvation*- and begin the next section of our catechism.

The next section is *Part 9: Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*.

Let’s begin by getting familiar with our first of tonight’s two catechism questions.

* **Our Triune God is United in Providing Salvation for the Elect**

**Q92. Is the Triune God united in providing salvation for the elect?**

Yes. Based on God having one eternal will, each of the three Persons carries out the same plan of salvation and judgment. God the Father chose the elect before the foundation of the world, Jesus died exclusively for those elect people, and the Holy Spirit only regenerates those same elect people.

* **the Triune God has one eternal will**

Working through the answer we see it states that God has “one eternal will.” We won’t take the time to fully dive the depths of this tonight, but it’s important that you know that *in fact* God has “one eternal will.”

From previous lessons and preaching we know that God exists eternally as *one God, three persons*.

But, being tempted to form God into our image, humans might think that three persons requires three different wills, one for each person of the Trinity. But that is not what Scripture teaches. It is not what orthodox historic Christianity has affirmed.

In the uniqueness of God’s divine existence, the one true and triune God has one divine eternal will.

John Owen said “It is true, **the will** of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, **is but one**. It is a natural property, and where there is but one nature **there is but one will**.”

In the 1689 Confession of Faith, speaking of the Triune God, it says, “The Lord **our God is one**, the only living and true God. … He works all things according to the counsel of **his own unchangeable and completely righteous will** for his own glory.”

Herman Bavinck said, of the Triune God, “The persons, though distinct, are not separate. They are the same in essence, one in essence, and the same being. They are not separated by time or space or anything else. They all share in the same divine nature and perfections. It is one and the same divine nature that exists in each person individually and in all of them collectively. Consequently, there is in God but one eternal, omnipotent, and omniscient being, **having one mind, one will, and one power**.”

We see the ever-important declaration in:

**Deuteronomy 6:4** “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one."

John Gill said, “…a trinity of persons in the unity of the divine essence, the Father, Word, and Holy Spirit, which three are one; the one God, the one Jehovah….”

The statement of “God having one eternal will” is in our answer because it is critically important to declare that the three persons of the Godhead are in perfect unity.

It is an impossibility within the divine Godhead for the persons of the Trinity to have different desires/wills/plans for anything, and therefore for whom from humanity is saved.

If we have a sound biblical understanding of who God is and how He works, we can know the answer to our question based just on that.

The three persons of the Trinity; the eternal Father, the eternal Jesus, the eternal Holy Spirit, have one eternal will and are in perfect agreement because of this.

Knowing and affirming this historic Christian truth is important because there are some false teachers (or simply misinformed folks) that teach or believe that there is different intent within each person of the Trinity.

For example, they say that God the Son died for every single person who ever lived making salvation “possible” for every person despite who the Father chose or who the Holy Spirit will actually regenerate. Or they say that the Holy Spirit is desiring and ineffectually trying to woo more people than the Father has elected or more people than Christ actually died for.

But, based on a right understanding of Theology Proper (the theology of God) this is not possible. Frankly, it is a serious dishonor to God to create in our minds a disunity within the Godhead…a disunity that does not and cannot exist.

So, we start at this point tonight because we always need to start with a right understanding of God when we consider anything.

* **each of the three Persons carries out the same plan of salvation and judgment**

As the answer continues, it says: “each of the three Persons carries out the same plan of salvation and judgment.”

Our God is not divided. There is not inconsistency, contradiction, or conflict in the Godhead. Each of the three Persons carries out the same plan of salvation and judgment.

Then, our answer finishes by clearly stating what each person of the Trinity primarily does to accomplish salvation according to God’s eternal will.

* **God the Father chose the elect before the foundation of the world**

In recent months, we’ve studied most of this in depth, so let’s just do a brief look at this.

Our answer says: “God the Father chose the elect before the foundation of the world”

We saw this in depth in our Covenant of Redemption lesson and our Election lesson.

**Ephesians 1:4-5**  says …[God] chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us…

In **John 6:39** Jesus says: “And this is the will of him [God the Father] who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all [all those God the Father chosen] that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.”

* **Jesus died exclusively for those elect people**

Next the answer says:

“Jesus died exclusively for those elect people”

We saw this in depth in the Limited Atonement lesson taught by Steve.

**John 10:15, 27-30** [Jesus said] “…I lay down my life for the sheep.” “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one.”

And:

**Ephesians 5:25** ...Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her

* **the Holy Spirit only regenerates those same elect people**

And our answer finishes by stating:

“and the Holy Spirit only regenerates those same elect people.”

This is something we studied in detail in our New Birth (Effectual Call) lesson also taught by Steve, and related lessons.

In Eze 36, God says of the elect,

**Ezekiel 36:26-27** “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you ...”

**Titus 3:5** [God] saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit

As we’ve seen at length now, **based on Scripture**, as historic Christianity affirms: The Triune God is united in providing salvation for the elect. Based on God having one eternal will, each of the three Persons carries out the same plan of salvation and judgment.

If we understand this, it is much easier to understand specifics within the doctrine of salvation.

This needs to be our plumb line.

Is *what we think* about who and how God saves in alignment with the plumb line that the Triune God is united in providing salvation for the elect?

If any of one’s thoughts about how and who God saves requires a person to deny or contradict this biblical plumb line, that particular thought must be corrected biblically.

Hopefully you see how central this catechism question and answer is.

Closing out the Doctrine of Salvation section of the catechism with this Q/A is a good solid review and transition.

As we wrap up this section, I want to note a few things.

First, this section included many topics within the doctrine of salvation, but note that we’ve talked about topics within the doctrine of salvation prior to this section (such as our Covenant Theology series, the Limited Atonement lesson, et cetera) and we will talk about the doctrine of salvation in subsequent sections also (such as perseverance of the saints next lesson, and glorification later).

This section had the majority focus on the doctrine of salvation, but it wasn’t all inclusive.

And second, I want to take a few minutes to remind you of the *order of salvation.*

* **Review: Ordo Salutis/Order of Salvation**

Rob hit on this a few weeks back in his lesson, and Pastor Joshua has in his preaching in the past as well.

Rob explained that the term *ordo salutis* is Latin for the phrase *order of salvation*. *Ordo salutis* is a historic term you should know.

The *ordo salutis*/*order of salvation* identifies the order in which the process of salvation happens.

Paul provides a condensed form of the ordo salutis in Romans 8:29–30.

And, On your notes I provide the order for you.

1) Election/Predestination – We learned when we studied it, that this is God’s choosing of whom He would save from fallen humanity and assigning them to the destiny of eternal salvation. This happened before creation.

2) General Call – This happens in time, in creation. We learned when we studied it, that the General Call is the gospel of Jesus Christ being proclaimed to all tribes, tongues, and nations. God has ordained that gospel proclamation is the vehicle by which He sets the table for salvation. God decreed to use human means of communication (spoken word, written word, sign language, etc) to proclaim the gospel. So, this, very simply, **is when the gospel is shared-- the gospel facts are made know**, and ideally, the call to repent and believe is set forth.

As we move on in the order, For the next four bullet points, be sure to note there is no time gap between them, they are all particularly ordered steps in the same moment.

3) Effectual Call/Regeneration - We learned when we studied it, that Effectual Call comes *during or after* a general call and is the act of God in which He graciously summons each of the elect to Himself and He regenerates them. We learned that God’s effective call- saving grace- always brings about the response it demands in people's hearts…It is irresistible grace.

4) Conversion (Saving Faith: repentance and trust in Christ alone) - We learned, God does the work of regeneration in a person, He then, immediately gives saving faith so they willingly have genuine repentance and trust in Jesus Christ.

5) Justification – We learned, is the legal declaration in which God *declares* a believer not guilty based on the imputed perfect righteousness of Jesus.

6) Adoption – We learned, is the gracious act of God in which He makes a believer one of His children, giving the privileges of sonship.

Now, again to reiterate, on those last four bullet points (3-6) there is no time delay between them. They all happen in what I call the “moment of salvation.”

A person cannot be effectively called for a while before he/she is regenerated,

or live for some length time regenerated before conversion repentance,

or repent of some sine but not turn to Christ in faith,

or have saving faith, but not be justified and adopted.

No, they are all *particularly ordered* steps in the same moment.

When God effectively calls us, we are *immediately* regenerated, and we turn from sin to Christ *immediately* in saving faith, and God *immediately* justifies and adopts us.

7) Perseverance and Sanctification – The time between the moment of salvation and final glorification when a saved person is persevered by God’s power (meaning kept saved) and sanctified by God’s power (meaning growth as a Christian, to become more and more Christ-like).

8) Final Glorification – Is the time to come when God separates us (the saved elect) fully and finally from all sin and evil, gives each of us made-new bodies, and keeps us sinless forever.

Now, we’ve studied **most** of these already.

Perseverance, Sanctification, and Final Glorification are three we’ll learn in more detail later.

We’ve taken the time here to cover this again because it is very important that you know these things. The order is critical and knowing this proves to be very helpful in how you think things through and understand things as you read Scripture.

Ok, moving on in our lesson…..

We saw that the end of our first catechism answer tonight spoke about the Holy Spirit. We now move into our next question, which is the first in the section: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, in our catechism.

* **What Is the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit and When Does It Happen?**

**Q93. What is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and when does it happen?**

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the action by which God takes up permanent residence in the body of an elect person at regeneration.

We begin this section with what’s called the *indwelling of the Holy Spirit*. In the last two centuries, this doctrine (and doctrines related to it) have commonly been misunderstood, so we’ll try to bring biblical clarity.

Our goal in this is fourfold:

- What is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and when does it happen?

- Has the Holy Spirit worked this way since God began saving the elect in Old Testament times?

- We’ll clarify misunderstood passages.

- And we’ll have some encouragement and exhortation.

We studied the new birth/regeneration in a lesson last section. And in that we’ve considered what regeneration is, when it happens, and who causes it.

Right along with regeneration is the blessing of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

As our answer says, “The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the action by which God takes up permanent residence in the body of an elect person at regeneration.”

So, based on God’s will and sovereign timing, a person whom He chose before the foundation of the world is regenerated, and **that** is the moment that the elect person is now indwelt by God, namely, the Holy Spirit.

Look at:

**Ezekiel 36:26-27** We see this clearly. Speaking of regeneration, God, through the prophet, says: And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

And speaking of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in that person, God, through the prophet, says: And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

Very clear. God gives new life, and in this He takes up permanent residence in the spiritually reborn person.

There are several *New Testament* passages confirming the teaching of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

To see a few, first,

**Romans 8:11** If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

Next, **1 Corinthians 6:19** [D]o you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?

Each of the saved have been made into a dwelling in which God the Holy Spirit resides.

This is a personal, intimate, blessed truth. For example, speaking of the personal nature of this reality **John 14:17** says: …the world cannot receive [Him], because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

On John 14:7, Theologian John Gill says “‘he dwells with you’ [means the Holy Spirit] is an inhabitant in your hearts, he has taken up his residence in you as his temples and ‘will be in you’ [means the Holy Spirit will be] as a Comforter….and as a spirit of truth to guide you into all truth, to stand by you, and assist you in preaching it, and to enable you to bear a faithful and glorious testimony for it.”

* **The Indwelling of the Spirit True Before and After the Cross**

Now, one important point of clarity needed in our day is that this indwelling reality of the Holy Spirit for the saved elect *has always been this way*.

Some unbiblical trends, especially in the last two centuries, has set forth the idea that the Holy Spirit didn’t actually indwell all true believers in the Old Testament times. But it is impossible for a person to be given new spiritual life without also being indwelt by God and carried along by God, who dwells in him/her.

Think about what we have seen clearly in Scripture in regard to how God saves. We’ve seen clearly that the process and work of God for our salvation from sin and wrath has always been the same since the fall.

What God ordained before time for the process and work of God for our salvation from sin and wrath is His unchanging decree and operation.

We’ve learned that those God chose for redemption will be saved and only those chosen persons.

We learned that salvation has always been and will only be by grace through faith in the Messiah, Jesus Christ alone...both before He took on flesh to complete His work and after.

We learned that Christ’s atonement for those elect persons was applied to the Old Testament saints before the cross, as it is to the saints in New Covenant times.

We’ve learned that a person is only saved by the sovereign work of God (as seen in Ezekiel 36) to cause a person to be born again, and, in that same Ezekiel 36 passage, for example, we see the necessary connection to the *indwelling of the Holy Spirit*.

For a saved person to truly be saved means that God makes said person a temple of the Holy Spirit and remains with him/her continually.

Salvation of any elect in any time period (Old or New Testament) requires this. It is impossible for a person to be given new spiritual life without also being indwelt by God and carried along by God, who dwells in him/her.

To this point, and several other good points, I want to quote and paraphrase Reformed Baptist theologian and historian Tom Nettles.

We’ve actually had Dr. Nettles in our church when hosted a conference where we were blessed to have him teach us for a few days.

To the point we’re currently considering, Nettles says this, “All of those [prior to Christ coming in flesh and the New Covenant being formally established] that had the persevering faith leading to eternal life could **not** have been void of the Spirit of God. Both faith and faithfulness are the fruit of the Spirit’s operations…”

Nettles goes on to quote a very critical passage, Romans 8:9…it says: Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

Nettles then stresses that this “establishes a condition of moral necessity true of any believer in any age. … Regeneration and indwelling are operations of the Spirit morally necessary for faith and perseverance in that faith.”

The working out of salvation depends on the continuing operation of divine power both in *the willing and the doing* into and through eternity.

The blessings of Regeneration *and indwelling* are not blessings of the post-cross time only, but are operations of the Spirit in every age, wherever God has saved His elect.

* **Understanding the *Coming of the Spirit* Type Passages**

Now, some get confused on this longstanding belief and often this confusion exists because of certain passages that *speak of the Spirit coming after Christ’s ascension*.

Passages like John 16:7. Jesus said during his incarnated life here in ministry, “Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.”

To understand rightly the indwelling of the Spirit, in order to not mix important realties, we also need to understand rightly what passages *like this* mean.

How are we to understand passages like John 16:7? Well, like much of Scripture, a cursory reading and attempt to interpret without considering all of Scripture (Tota Scriptura) can lead to incorrect, contradicting conclusions.

Passages like John 16:7 do **not** mean the Holy Spirit had not been doing His work of indwelling and persevering as one might wrongly conclude. **Rather,** these passages speak to **other** specific realties taking place after the New Covenant was formally established, such as the formal establishment of the New Covenant “church,” the *advancement* of the Spirit’s work in gifting, teaching, and sanctification in this now established New Covenant church, and the unique giving of miraculous (but temporary) gifts during the Apostolic period.

To say that point again simply, this passage and others like it are not speaking about the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, but about other specific realties taking place after the New Covenant was formally established.

Nettles again, “Some operations of the Spirit [such as the indwelling of the Spirit in the regenerated elect] are common to believers under both the Old and New Covenants for they are essential, morally necessary, for the presence of eternal life. Then there are some operations of the Spirit that clearly mark out the New Covenant people and era from the Old. These functions are **not** morally necessary for the presence of eternal life…” “[T]he Spirit is necessary for one to believe in Christ, belong to Christ, to mortify the flesh, to advance spiritual life, and to persevere in a fruitful knowledge of Christ. Clearly operative in an effectual manner among the Old Covenant elect was the Spirit in the ministry of regeneration and indwelling.”

* **the formal establishment of the New Testament “church”**

Now, regarding some operations of the Spirit forthcoming in the time of Christ with His disciples, Nettles helps us again,

“Jesus speaks of the Spirit’s coming in the fulfillment of the New Covenant, creating a people as a community… The Spirit had not yet been given in that way, as the creator of the community …”

In the New Covenant, God would secure for himself people *as the unified local church* that would, ‘consider how to stir up one another to love and good works’ (Hebrews 10:24).”

“The Christ has come to bring into one family both Jew and Gentiles and inhabit the whole of these communities, called churches. The Spirit brings [them] together and, by the truth and through his distribution of gifts, presents the entire community mature in Christ.”

* **the unique giving of miraculous (but temporary) gifts during the Apostolic period**

To our point about the unique giving of miraculous (but temporary) gifts during the Apostolic period, we know that the office of Apostle was carried along for a particular time in the New Covenant for the blessing of Christ’s people. Tied to this temporary Apostolic time period were specific gifts of the Holy Spirit to members of the New Covenant church. These things were a significant blessing to the early church. (We’ll study apostleship and the gift in view here in a latter lesson.) They were purposed by God for the inspiration of the remainder of the cannon of Scripture, the jump start to the spreading of the gospel worldwide, and the building up of the newly established New Covenant church.

* **the advancement of the Spirit’s work in gifting, teaching, and sanctification in this now established New Covenant church**

To this point and to our points about the *advancement* of the Spirit’s work in gifting, teaching, and sanctification in this now established New Covenant church, Nettles says “Since the Spirit of God is the Spirit of truth, his operations in sanctification in the new covenant are more powerful and thorough than before the coming of Christ, for the shadows and types now are fulfilled and made clear by Christ’s appearing.”

The explanation of the shadows and types of the person and work of Christ by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit may now be known in the fully intended way.

These shadows and types have been fulfilled in Christ, the shadows and types were replaced by the real thing, so the Spirit can illuminate these clarities in the saved saints not dimly as mysteries to come, but as completed realties, mystery removed.

Nettles continues “As distinct from that remnant of true believers in Israel, the believers [in the New Covenant time] have the example of Christ, the teaching of Christ, the fullness of the revelation in Scripture, the community of saints (called the church) to exhort, reprove, and encourage, and the variety of gifts granted to the church by the Spirit in Christ’s ascension (Ephesians 4:1-7). After Christ’s ascension, this gift of the Spirit marked the new community and people that believed in him with corporate holiness, personal holiness, and gifts for teaching and order (1 Corinthians 12:3-13).”

With the Christ’s gospel work complete and, shortly after that, the inspiration of Scripture complete, the Spirit can now, **with even more clarity,** impress on the minds of believers that Christ’s blood and righteousness are eternally sufficient for the presence and enjoyment of eternal life.

“When Jesus’ work reached its fullness in his ascension, the Spirit’s work can also reach its fullness in assurance and granting of gifts for the development of the universal Church as the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit revealed all those elements that are necessary to understand the mysteries of the gospel. According to John 14:26 “He [the Holy Spirit] will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” and then in John 16:13, Jesus added, “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth.” This is a ministry of teaching. The Spirit gave truths to the apostles about Christ that had not been spoken by Christ. Christ had given some indicators of the direction that this more expanded revelation would go, but the details and its application would be a unique ministry communicated through the Apostles and, under their authority, prophets in the local churches (Ephesians 2:19-22; 3:4, 5)”

To be clear, “The gift of revelation is not new, for the Old Testament writers wrote in accordance with it (as we are told in 1 Peter 1:10-12). New, however, is the **fullness and eventual completeness** of revealed truth. The gift of the apostolic ministry for the exposition of the meaning of Jesus as the Christ in his work as Prophet, Priest, and King is peculiarly a new covenant blessing that can only be completed after Christ’s ascension. Under the New Covenant operations of the Spirit, subsequent to the revelation of the glory of God in Christ, the word of the prophets is “made more sure,” given greater clarity by showing both the person and the manner in which the messianic promises of suffering and glory were fulfilled (cf. 1 Peter 1:10-12 w/ 2 Peter 1:15-19). This is one way in which the Spirit has been given in a way that He was not before”

So, the points being made here are to clarify that passages like John 16:7 are not speaking about indwelling of the Holy Spirit, but about other specific realties taking place after the New Covenant was formally established. To understand rightly the indwelling of the Spirit, in order to not mix important realties, we also need to understand rightly what passages like this mean. I hope you benefited by these clarifications.

* **Key ‘Indwelling of the Holy Spirit’ Scripture Recap**

Let’s recap now some key things we said about the indwelling of the Holy Spirit before we close with some application.

We must understand the *indwelling of the Holy Spirit* has always been a reality for saved saints.

We know in **John 3** Jesus teaches that one must be born of the Spirit, have the Spirit.

We saw in **Ezekiel 36** that God “puts” (indwells) the Spirit in each of the saved at regeneration.

And speaking clearly about the indwelling of the Spirit in the saved:

We saw in **1 Corinthians 6:19** that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God.

We saw in **John 14:17** the Spirit of truth dwells with you.

We saw in **Romans 8:11** that the Spirit dwells in you.

* **Closing Encouragement and Exhortation**

So, believer, you have the *God the Holy Spirit* indwelling you.

Since the very moment you were regenerated, **God** took up permanent residence in you.

Because the Holy Spirit dwells in you all the benefits of being saved are possible. To name a few:

* + You are sealed by the Holy Spirit.
  + You will remain saved because He can never leave you, He keeps you saved.
  + You are forever adopted as a child of God.
  + You are being sanctified (growing in Christlikeness).
  + You are being effectually taught by the Holy Spirit.
  + You are united to Christ and a part of His one body.
  + The Spirit who indwells you produces the fruit of the Spirit in you.
  + You are gifted by the Spirit.
  + Your body is a living dwelling of God the Spirit.

The indwelling of the Spirit is a sweet truth. It’s a comforting truth. It’s a sanctifying truth. Know that God dwells in you. This should change everything about you. We cannot be the same people we were before He took up residence in us—biblically it’s not possible. I hope this teaching encourages you and God uses it to continue to grow you.

Let’s close with a passage:

Galatians 5:16-25

**16**…I say, **walk by the Spirit**, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. **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. **18**But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the [condemnation of the] law. **19**Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, **20**idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, **21**envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. **22**But**the fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,**23**gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. **24**And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

**25If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit**.

Let’s pray.