Section: Doctrine of the Holy Spirit (Pneumatology)

Lesson 78: Wednesday December 09, 2020

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**TEACHING NOTES**

**Q95. In addition to being the seal of our salvation, what is the Holy Spirit’s ongoing ministry to the saved?**

The Holy Spirit enables us to understand God’s word, convicts us of sin, comforts us, prays for us, leads us, gives us spiritual gifts, and causes in us increasing desire and ability to obey God.

**Q96. By what evidence does one show true saving faith?**

By the work of God’s power and grace, the saved imperfectly but increasingly show the fruit of the Spirit, repent from sin, affirm biblical truth, grow in holiness by obeying God’s word, love others, live within Christian community, and abide in Christ by persevering in saving faith.

Let’s read our catechism question and answer.

Q95. In addition to being the seal of our salvation, what is the Holy Spirit’s ongoing ministry to the saved? The Holy Spirit enables us to understand God’s word, convicts us of sin, comforts us, prays for us, leads us, gives us spiritual gifts, and causes in us increasing desire and ability to obey God.

As I begin to unpack the various activities of the Holy Spirit in His ministry to the elect, you will see the greatness of God manifest in the third person of the trinity. You will, I pray, see our God deeper and aim to delight in him more and more.

We will cover seven main areas outlined in our catechism answer.

1. The Holy Spirit enables us to understand God’s word.
2. The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin.
3. The Holy Spirit gives a desire and ability to obey God.
4. The Holy Spirit leads us.
5. The Holy Spirit comforts us.
6. The Holy Spirit prays for us.
7. The Holy Spirit gives us spiritual gifts.

Let’s get started.

1. **The Holy Spirit enables us to understand God’s word.**

I’m going to spend some time initially in 1 Corinthians chapter 2. Look with me at verse 12 & 13: 12 Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. 13 And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

Paul has two categories in mind in verse 12: *The spirit of the world and the Spirit who is from God.*

Paul teaches that humans either have the spirit of the world or have received the Spirit who is from God. The reference to the spirit of the world is seen elsewhere in scripture. In Ephesians 2:2 Paul calls Satan the “spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.” By definition, any Christian prior to conversion is a son of disobedience. So, the spirit of the world is likely a reference to Satan. What Paul is teaching here is consistent with how we understand the work of God’s kingdom here on earth. There are two cosmic realities in the universe. Either the devil is your father or God is your father.

Now, Paul’s teaching is that if are still with the spirit of the world, then we cannot understand the things freely given by God. Those who do not have the Spirit of God cannot understand, in a saving way, the gospel and other biblical truths. So, the question we must now ask as Christians is: What is the effect of receiving the Spirit of God? Paul gives us the answer at the end of our verse: *that we might understand things freely given to us by God and impart this understanding to others.*

What are the things that are freely given to us? He has given us the Son, justifying righteousness, remission of sins, adoption and eternal life. Namely, he’s given us the gospel and all the riches of sound doctrine!

Let’s look at the next verse in our Corinthians passage: 1 Corinthians 2:13 And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

Notice at the end of verse 13, Paul instructs us of one of the Holy Spirit’s functions. The Holy Spirit causes us, according to God’s will and timing, to rightly interpret and rightly understand spiritual truths. This is the doctrine of *illumination*.

It is interesting to note here in our passage that a blessing for interpreting spiritual truths does not terminate on us, rather it also gets communicated to others in our sharing. We are to know spiritual truths *for* those who God puts in our life to share with. This is a good reminder for our study time. *Are we learning about spiritual truth (theology) for the sake of our spouses, families, congregation, city, and the nations—for those whom we will evangelize and/or preach to?* Or is our study merely a practice of gaining knowledge? The reality is that it should not be an intellectual exercise only, our study should be something much more. It should also be *for* those who God puts in our life to share with.

Back to our text, what are the spiritual truths that Paul here references? It is being born again. It is being Christian. It is living by the Spirit. It is being a slave of Christ. It is the right interpretation of scripture. *It is all of these things.*

While all of scripture is spiritual truth Paul is not solely referring to scripture in this text. He is primarily speaking of the work of the Spirit in and through the Christian. We have the Spirit in us to discern spiritual things in order to impart the gospel to the elect.

Let us read on: 14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

As I touched on before, the natural person (the unbeliever) does not accept the things of the Spirit of God. They are incomprehensible to them—they cannot understand them because these things are of the Spirit. To be clear, the unbeliever can read the scriptures and in *certain ways* understand the words, but that kind of reading and fleshy understanding has no power to bring spiritual life; the regenerative act of the Holy Spirit must take place.

We as believers possess the Holy Spirit! By the work of the Holy Spirit, the scriptures impart their meaning, wisdom, and power to us. This is the doctrine of illumination. The Holy Spirit shines light on a text of scripture that allows Christians to rightly understand it and apply it to our lives. Does this mean that whenever we open the scriptures the Spirit automatically gives us the correct interpretation? No, that is not how God ordained the experience of the redeemed on this fallen earth. We are mere human, more than that we persist in a fallen world with our fleshly bodies. Our fallibility and sin ever stands in the way of rightly understanding and applying the scriptures. As long as we have sin persisting in our flesh, we show our desperate need all the more of the Holy Spirit to illuminate our heart and mind to see the truth communicated in the Word. As the Holy Spirit illuminates Scripture’s truth to each of us, we do understand and grow in knowledge, but this happens over time.

And in this process, God has ordained “means.” Remember, Ephesians 4:11-13, “[God] gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”.

In the here and now we look to the Holy Spirit inspired Scripture, (given by the “means” of the apostles and the prophets) and are blessed by that being taught by sound Christians of earlier generations and by our elders (the “means” of shepherds and teachers mentioned in Eph 4).

At Disciples Church we are greatly blessed by a plurality of mature teachers and elders as *a means* that the Holy Spirit uses in His work of illumination, so we can interpret and understand the scriptures. And, we should certainly not ignore the centuries of faithful Christians who have labored in God’s word before us. That is why we are a confessional church; we confess the truths of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith. This was not a document written in haste. Faithful Christians labored to condense the truth of scripture into a common confession that expressed the core of what it is that a faithful Christian should believe according to scripture. So, we must affirm the doctrine of illumination, and know the ways the Holy Spirit does this work, often through means—these are great gifts that God gives his earthly church, mature saints who have passed on and who live among us.

Let’s look at the next 3 points:

1. **The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin.**
2. **The Holy Spirit gives a desire and ability to obey God.**
3. **The Holy Spirit leads us.**

1Cor 2:7 But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory.1Cor 2:8 None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.1Cor 2:9 But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”—1Cor 2:10 these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

1st Cor 2:7-10 teaches us that the saints of God impart (or tell) others of the ‘hidden wisdom of God’, this hidden wisdom has been revealed to us through the Spirit. The hidden wisdom is the gospel of God, that He by His sheer grace redeems unworthy sinners through the person and work of Christ. The Spirit dwells in us and thus it knows us fully as it knows God fully because the Spirit is God fully. I labor to explain this so that we understand that the Spirit has given us a type of knowledge. What is that knowledge? It is the knowledge of righteousness, of the fruits of the spirit, of the gospel, of saving grace, of scriptural illumination, etc. We are *made new* by the Spirit.

When we walk by the Spirit, which really can be summed up as walking by the word and letting scripture rule our hearts, when we do this – we *will not* gratify the desires of the flesh. Paul teaches of this briefly in Galatian 5:16, But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. This is quite simple in explanation. If we live worldly lives, apart from the Spirit, we will be worldly. But, if we live spiritually sound lives in step with the Holy Spirit, we will not gratify our desires. Instead, we will walk in righteousness.

What God does in the hearts of believers is change our desires. He convicts us of our sin. When we are saved, we no longer see the world as ultimately glorious. Instead, we see God as glorious. This change of desires and affections only happens as the Holy Spirit works in our hearts to change those internal desires.

If the Spirit enables us to live by the word, to walk in the statues of what is taught to us in scripture, then it proceeds from this understanding that the scriptures, as aided in the Holy Spirit’s work of illumination, are able correct and reproof/rebuke us. The Spirit draws our attention to our sin and uses God’s very words to teach us and lead us. We see this in 2 Tim 3:16-17 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Have you ever struggled with sin that, as a Christian, you’ve progressively gained victory over? Have you matured in the fruits of the Spirit? Have you grown in your knowledge of God? These are results of the Holy Spirit’s work in your life! All Christians know that it is a wonderful thing to see our sin as detestable against the backdrop of the perfect God *who* ransoms us (in spite of our poor performance) by Jesus Christ’s perfect performance.

A similar ministry of the Spirit is found here as well, He leads us. Romans 8:14 says, For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

As the Spirit convicts us of our sin, He leads us into walking by the word through repentance and faith. We are no longer lead by the spirit of the world. He leads us from sin and from our unrighteousness. He leads us unto glorification. He leads us by illuminating truth to us by the means of pastors, teachers, community, and, as we’ve seen clearly, the illumination of the Holy Scriptures.

Let me break all three of these points down so you can see how they work together.

1. The act of bringing conviction/reproof is worked in us by the Spirit. To be reproved by scripture is to acknowledge our sin.
2. The Spirit works in and through us to give us a new desire to not only see our sin, but turn from it (repent) and turn toward God (walk by faith).
3. That giving of a new desire and enabling us to repent and turn from sin is the active leading of the spirit.

It’s truly amazing to think of how active the Spirit is as we are sanctified in our Christian walk!

Next, let’s look at how the Spirit comforts us and prays for us.

1. **The Holy Spirit comforts us.**
2. **The Holy Spirit prays for us.**

Romans 8:26 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.

The Spirit is capable of helping us in our weakness. Indeed, the full testimony of scripture is that God works in those who are in need of a physician, not in those who are well (as if there was such a thing).

This verse is one of those verses that gives me great comfort. I have meditated on it in times of distress and frustration. How often do we get so wound up in our own humanity that it seems difficult to escape? In a moment – life can change. Do you not know this Christian? In a moment a loved one can be gone. In a moment we can lose it all. In a moment we can have the world against us. We are burdened by fatigue, illness and distractions. We have sorrows and difficulties. And, often in the fog of our half-baked thoughts, even our desire or ability to pray seems to fall short. This is life on earth. This is life in exile.

And what does the verse say? In our weakness…we do not know what to pray for as we ought. How true is this? In times of great trial, we need those to enter into our suffering with us. Job’s friends sat with him for 7 days and did not utter a word. Think on this for a moment. We are so quick to mend our pain, but Job lamented for 7 days. That is not to give Job’s friends a pass, they did much wrong in their assessment of Job. But, when was the last time in our *get it now* culture that you sat to truly mourn for a length of time? Job’s mourning clues us into the terrifying reality of loss and sin that can totally overwhelm us.

Christian community loving us in trials is a great gift of God, but the most intimate help we are blessed with is the Holy Spirit! In moments of pain and suffering, the Holy Spirit not only deciphers our random and disjointed prayers, but He himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. Feel the weight of this reality! The Spirit, who is God, is capable of searching all of God’s infinite attributes. In His intercession, He groans for us. Our God understands suffering. Indeed, He ordains it. He plans it. He holds it in his hand. Lest you don’t believe me, look to Job again. Who had to have permission to afflict him? Satan did. Permission from Whom? God. Any time we are under trial, it is by the divine decree of God for our good. Trust Him.

The Holy Spirit is with us in our suffering. The Spirit is in our hearts and intercedes for our lowly stature. Who are we that we should have an advocate in the Spirit? Who are we that we should have an advocate in Christ? Who are we that God may shine his grace on us?

Praise be to God.

1. **The Holy Spirit gives us spiritual gifts.**

Finally, when people think of the Holy Spirit, it is common for most people to only think of miraculous signs and gifts. Indeed, our culture is full of people claiming these things. I will not venture into a detailed discussion of the spiritual gifts tonight as we will cover this topic in full at a later point.

However, let me give you a broad overview.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 11 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

As we can see in the text, the Holy Spirit dispenses a variety of gifts to individuals in the church. It is foundational and crucial that we see that these gifts are for the common good. The gifts are given for the saints, for public community, to profit all. These gifts are maintained and granted by the Spirit. Such spiritual gifts can be seen as, but not limited to, serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, mercy, etc.

Throughout the history of the church the Holy Spirit has dispensed various gifts to believers for the advancement of the gospel and the ultimate glory of God. These gifts are not for man’s glory and they are only by the power of the Holy Spirit. Any gift that we are given is a gift from God to build up the saints and the community at large. In doing so, they serve to glorify God.

With that, let’s move on to our next question.

**Q96. By what evidence does one show true *saving faith*?**

By the work of God’s power and grace, the saved imperfectly but increasingly show the fruit of the Spirit, repent from sin, affirm biblical truth, grow in holiness by obeying God’s word, love others, live within Christian community, and abide in Christ by persevering in saving faith.

Our next question is an interesting one. Have you ever asked, “How do I know if I’m truly saved?” I’ve heard interesting responses to that question. However, as believers, we are called to make our election known. We are called to know our standing before God. This will pose some problems for us if we don’t know how to rightly judge if our faith is truly saving or merely superficial.

Let’s read the catechism question & answer:

Q96. By what evidence does one show true saving faith? By the work of God’s power and grace, the saved imperfectly but increasingly show the fruit of the Spirit, repent from sin, affirm biblical truth, grow in holiness by obeying God’s word, love others, live within Christian community, and abide in Christ by persevering in saving faith.

I will break this answer into 8 parts.

1. We, the saved, imperfectly but increasingly, grow in these things.
2. The saved show the fruit of the Spirit.
3. The saved repent from sin.
4. The saved affirm biblical truth and grow in holiness by obedience to God’s word.
5. The saved love others.
6. The saved live within Christian community.
7. The saved abide in Christ by persevering in saving faith.
8. The saved do these things by God’s power and grace.
9. **We, the saved, imperfectly but increasingly, grow in these things.**

This first point to is meant to illustrate a point that needs to be on our minds as we work through the remaining points.

We, the church, are declared righteous because of the imputation of Jesus' righteousness to each of us, but we are not functionally and personally perfect at our new birth and will not be in this life. If we are truly saved, we will increasingly grow in these things.

There will be various results and experiences for all of God’s people in display of the fruits of the Spirit, repentance, affirmation of biblical truths, holiness, obedience, brotherly love, etc. Why is that? Because we’re not saved unto immediate perfection. Rather, we are saved unto a life of continual repentance and transformation by the Spirit of God.

As you keep this in mind, let’s dive in and take a look at the next point:

1. **The saved show the fruit of the Spirit.**

Turn with me to Galatians 5:22-23. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”

For those of us who are believers, we are granted access to the fullness of the fruit of the Spirit. How is this so? As I’ve covered in past lessons, the scriptures teach that we were once under the dominion of sin. That is, sin was our slave master and we were its subjects. Paul argues this in Romans 6:14: For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Now that we are under grace and have the Spirit of God in us, He produces in us the fruit of the Spirit. A person who is a slave to sin will only sin continually. So, it is appropriate to say that love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control aren’t experienced *in truth* by non-believers.

John Owen said, “The best duties of unbelievers are but white lies.”

This is a controversial saying because we often look to the world and see non-believing individuals who appear to have *more* fruit of the spirit than us. How is that so?

A non-believer may show kindness, joy, peace and patience. But the kindness that the non-believer displays is only a tool for them to get what they want. They may want accolades, prestige, sympathy, etc. They live in accord with their sinful (from birth) nature. This sinful nature only acts in accord with selfish desire. Fallen human nature only tolerates God for what He gives man, not for who He is as the one true Sovereign. If we love Christ, we will obey Him. If we love self, we will obey self.

Now, the Christian may indeed struggle with persistent fleshly desires *but* the flesh has no dominion over us. Thus, we may employ love, joy, peace and patience for the same sinful reasons as the non-believer, but the difference is that if we’re truly believers we will, over time, increasingly act in ways that show we love Christ, not the flesh. Indeed, as we are conformed to the image of Christ, we righteously exhibit more and more fruit of the Spirit.

Let’s move on to our next point.

1. **The saved repent from sin.**

This comes on the heels of the previous point. I will not spend a ton of time on this point. I want to continue to drive home the two cosmic realities that exist: The kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world. We only gain entrance to the kingdom of God through the regeneration of the Spirit, on the basis of Christ, who has lived and died and rose again for the elect.

Jesus says in Matthew 3:8, “Bear fruit in keeping with repentance.” In this passage, Jesus is rebuking the Pharisees. Indeed, this verse comes on the heels of Christ calling the Pharisees a brood of vipers. Jesus continues in this passage to illustrate that any tree that does not bear fruit will be cut down and burn in the fire. The command for all, Pharisee, Gentile and Christian alike, is to repent. When we keep with repentance, we will bear fruit. The distinction is this: we can only bear fruit by the work and power of the Holy Spirit. Those who are saved will bear fruit, those who aren’t cannot.

Even though we continue to struggle with sin, we will progressively lay down our sinful desires to live in righteousness for Christ- this is the ongoing repentance we’ve been teaching about. We do not do this to gain or keep entrance into Heaven, we do this as a *result* of the work of Christ on our behalf and the Holy Spirit in us.

1. **The saved affirm biblical truth and grow in holiness by obedience to God’s word.**

Look with me at 2 Timothy 2:15: Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

Let me give you my paraphrase: Do your best to present yourself to your boss as a model employee, who has no need to be worried about hiring you because you have thoroughly prepared for the job at hand.

What is our job? Matthew 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

What is our tool? The Word of Truth. The Scriptures. The Gospel.

In any trade, it is profitable to know the functions of the tools you use, but it is also profitable to know how to apply them to any job. This is knowledge and wisdom. Notice the text again. To rightly handle the word of truth is to make the Christian unashamed before God. What is the assumption here? Those who know the scriptures, those who possess wisdom and those who *work* will be presented to God as one approved. This means that the saved will be continually growing in their knowledge of scripture and biblical wisdom. To neglect biblical truth is to neglect the very tools God has given you for the job.

But what about obedience? It is one thing to affirm truth, but isn’t it an entirely different thing to be obedient to truth?

Affirmation is to approve of something. Obedience is application. Obedience is putting the truths of scripture into practice in our daily lives. Simply put, the saved will do this, there is no option. It’s built into the foundation of our rebirth! We sit under excellent Bible based teaching weekly and one of Josh’s main points week-in and week-out is to bring our conscience under conviction by drawing us to walk in obedience to Christ and the Word.

When listening to a sermon or reading your Bible, or meditating on the word or in prayer - what is that thing that the Holy Spirit has laid out in the text? Walk in obedience to submit yourself to these things! As we continually walk in obedience to God, we will grow in Christ likeness unto eventual glorification in Heaven.

Speaking of obedience, one of the most important areas of obedience is to love others.

1. **The saved love others.**

Any person who knows anything about Christians knows that we are all supposed to love others. Whether these people define love properly is beside the point right now. Jesus said in Matthew 22:39, when speaking of the second greatest commandment that “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” This is a summary statement of the 2nd table of the 10 commandments, which is all about honoring God through loving mankind. Paul reiterates this statement in Romans 13:9, For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Adultery, murder, theft, covetousness, etc. All of these sins are a violation of love of neighbor. As Christians, we are not saved by our adherence to the law, but we show our esteem for God by obedience to the fullness of His moral law. As we know from our Ten Commandments lessons, adherence to these principles goes quite deep. Adultery can go as deep as a thought of lust aimed at another person. Murder is unjust anger toward another. I could go on and on. Sin is much more than what people see on the outside. Sin starts in our heart.

And so, when we are freed from the shackles of sin and given new birth, we are started on a journey of being conformed to Christ’s image. This is worked and powered by the Spirit of God within us. Our lust dwindles, our murderous thoughts die off, etc. In doing so, we learn to love others more fully.

In a horizontal respect, all of the Christian life is summed up in loving others. We share the gospel out of a desire that peoples everywhere would repent and turn to Christ for salvation. We do this from a heart of love, love that yearns for the least of these – that God would redeem them through our sharing of the gospel. We serve others with our counsel, money, work, prayer, compassion and presence in the hopes that the transformational love that we’ve been shown would shine outward and bring darkened hearts to life.

Christian – do not forsake this wonderful Spirit enabled truth, let us grow in obedience of loving others as Christ first loved the unlovely – us.

Let’s look at the next point.

1. **The saved live within Christian community.**

It should be self-evident that the Christian should live in Christian community. This is one of the main functions and blessings of the church, the fellowship of the saints.

It is all to common in our day and age for people to deprioritize committed and accountable life in the body of Christ. Some will go so far to believe they are successfully following Jesus even though they are disregarding His clear commands to be accountable to and regularly involved in the local church body. This is the result of a fundamental theological blindness. If you love Christ, then you love what He loves. You, as a believer, are becoming ever transformed into his character and likeness. Christ loves the church. We do not show love for Christ by forsaking the church.

In this era of coronavirus lockdowns, we’ve seen governments overreach and attempt to dictate to God’s church how she should conduct worship and gather or not. I am thankful for our church’s faithfulness to submit to Christ in all of these matters. I am also thankful to see such a strong commitment by our local church family to gather and continue to practice all the of the things our Lord has called us to. As we move forward in times like these, let us remain faithful to meeting with one another and doing the work of the ministry God has prioritized for us. While, there is a time and place for Biblical wisdom to direct alterations in how we should meet, may we continue to trust in God, follow our God appointed shepherds and remain faithful to each other despite any obstacles we may face.

What is the purpose for community for believers? Let us look to Hebrews 10:24-25. Hebrews 10:24-25 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. Let us stir one another up. The author of Hebrews is speaking of the church and its need to be righteous. In speaking of that, it is necessary for believers to GATHER TOGETHER to encourage and rebuke one another. We cannot do this by ourselves. God’s word says clearly to be, “**not** neglecting to meet together.”

Gather with the church you are committed to, when that church gathers. You will be blessed by this commitment, as will others. You may not see all the ways God is working in this, but He is. Trust Him, believe His word.

Consider as well that God, in His triune nature, has shown that He is a community unto Himself. The Trinity is the most preeminent display of other centered love in the universe! God didn’t create people because He was lonely. He is eternally pleased in His relationship with the Son and the Holy Spirit. As we are created in God’s image, we are created with that same yearning to belong to community. Our sin pushes us to distort community. We want to be individuals and an authority unto ourselves. We are so easily blinded and swayed by falsehood! Christian, we need to be led by shepherds, we need to be prayed for, we need to be encouraging others and being encouraged by our brothers and sisters. We need to belong. We were created to belong. Christian community is being known by Christ and our co-heirs in truth.

1. **The saved abide in Christ by persevering in saving faith.**

We’ve spoken of the perseverance of the saints before. But, here’s a quick refresher. If you are a true believer then you will persist in the faith forever.

Colossians 1:21-23 And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22 he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, 23 if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

These sorts of verses are littered all over the New Testament. It’s very common for people to misunderstand them and twist them. I’ve often heard people ask, “If we can’t lose our salvation, then why does the New Testament warn us so much about it?” Much of the New Testament verses are teaching perseverance. Look to our Colossians verse. In order to be presented to God as holy, blameless and above reproach, we must continue in the faith.

Let us look at some other verses to give us a more balanced view. Remember, we must weigh all of scripture together when dealing with these issues.

Romans 8:29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

If God predestined and chose us, then is God incorrect in choosing people when they apparently ‘lose’ their salvation? Is God just a good guesser, but He’s really just letting us call the shots? Or, is our Colossians text teaching us a separate truth?

It is indeed teaching us a separate truth! It’s teaching us that the life of the Christian is a life of continual repentance and faith. There are some who appear to live as faithful believers, but then fall away proving they had a superficial faith. We see this taught explicitly in 1 John 2:19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

Those of us who are in Christ, we must take these warning seriously. We need to continue to live by faith. Not because God may drop us and stop saving us, but because the deceitfulness of sin is real. Believers need to be edified and encouraged to continue the race because living in exile is difficult. Doubt and fear are real!

We live in a fallen world with fallen temptations. God has ordained that the process of sanctification for believers is a bit of baptism by fire. We’re to walk through the valley and cling to the cross while we do it. We can’t do this if at rebirth he makes us into fully perfect beings. When we walk through trial, we see and savor the truth of Christ even more. God’s ordination of this truth is for our hearts to know Him deeper.

Finally, all of the things I’ve spoken about tonight are only by God’s power and grace.

1. **The saved do these things by God’s power and grace.**

To illustrate this, look at 1 Corinthians 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

Paul worked. That is, in his human will and exertion, he worked. But here is the paradox. It was not Paul that worked of his own accord, it was the grace of God within him. Let us claim the same. We should work. We shouldn’t wait for an epiphany. We are told to grow in our understanding of God’s word and holiness, and go and make disciples. We are not told to wait for a sign from the Lord telling us to move to Fiji or Bali. We need to quit making excuses and be obedient to His word here and now!

The gifting of the fruit of the spirit, these are not your doing. Repentance is not your doing. Growth in obedience, holiness, knowledge, truth and wisdom is not your doing. Loving others is not your doing. Persisting in faith through the trials of life is not your doing. Shall I go on? Yet I also say, **DO these things**……while knowing you are fully dependent upon God. He gets the glory as He works in and through you.

Philippians 2:13 … it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

All that we accomplish in the Spirit is by the grace and power of God in us. What a glorious God we serve!

Let’s pray.