Section: Doctrine of the Holy Spirit (Pneumatology)

Wednesday, December 4, 2024

Sam Jones

**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.

Good evening church, my name is Sam Jones. I am a member of Disciples Church and part of the teaching team. Tonight, we will study two questions from the Word of Truth Catechism, Question 95 and Question 96. These questions fall under Part 9 of the Word of Truth Catechism, which is the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, also called Pneumatology. Two lessons ago Justin taught through Question 93. What is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and when does it happen? This was the first question under the Doctrine of the Holy Spirt. Two weeks ago, Steve taught us question 94. Can a true Christian abandon or lose his/her salvation? Each question and answer of the Word of Truth Catechism helps us to dig deeper into our understanding of the area of theology that we are studying, in this case Pneumatology. And as we build our understanding lesson by lesson, we should also be experiencing a deeper appreciation for our Great God. This comes from the lessons themselves, then is built on in our discussion time, and ultimately is realized in how we apply our knowledge of God in our daily walks. Coming to midweek and participating in the discussion groups is a layer of discipleship. It is an opportunity for you to learn and grow in Christ likeness.

I am excited to share with you the lesson I prepared for Questions 95 and 96. My goal is to show you in Scripture where we find the answers to these questions and to unpack the meaning of the verses we review. Let’s pray and then we will dive into the lesson.

We have a lot to cover, so let’s get going.

Question 95 of the Word of Truth Catechism.

**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.

Question 95 starts by asking, “In addition to being the seal of our salvation.” This is because our last lesson was on that subject. Steve Obert taught an encouraging lesson on the Holy Spirit persevering Christians in their faith from the moment of salvation. Meaning that the Holy Spirit seals the new believer into their state of faith. In other words, once a Christian is saved, they cannot lose their salvation. This is a glorious truth of the work of the Holy Spirit, and I want to share some of Steve’s words with you as a reminder of his lesson because we will be building on it tonight.

Steve said…

**God the Father ensures the endurance of His elect by sealing them with God the Holy Spirit. This is the way God “holds” the believers in His hand. God the Holy Spirit takes up residence in the believer at the moment of regeneration (when they are born again). The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance as children of God until the future truth is made a reality-until we acquire possession of it. This is incredible, the triune God is always unified in the work of salvation, however each person of the triune God has distinct roles in salvation. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit keep the believer saved.**

**You see the Scriptures say that God the Father and God the Son hold the believer causing them to be safely saved, and the scriptures say that God the Holy Spirit dwells in the true believer sealing them and keeping them in the faith until their end. The triune God causes salvation and keeps the believer saved.**

So, the Holy Spirit indwells a new believer at regeneration and acts as the seal of their salvation. That sentence is a brief synopsis of the last two lessons in this section of the Word of Truth Catechism. Now we are moving forward to look at other aspects of the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

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

The question now specifies that we are going to look at the ongoing ministry of the Holy Spirit to the saved. How does the Holy Spirit continuously effect the hearts and lives of those that He has already given a new heart and sealed to salvation in Christ?

The answer states.

(SLOW DOWN AND EMPHASIZE EACH ITEM)

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.

We are going to work through each of these seven items:

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

We will start with point number 1.

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

As we read through the Word of Truth Catechism you will see that there are reference verses listed to show where in Scripture the answers come from. I will be begin to unpack how the Holy Spirit enables us to understand God’s word with the reference verse.

**John 14:25-26**

**25“These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. 26But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.**

In these versus Jesus is promising the disciples that the Holy Spirit will be given as a helper after he is gone, meaning ascended to Heaven. He specifies that the Holy spirit will “teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” This had to be a major comfort to these men that had been walking with and learning from Jesus for the last three years. They still do not understand what is going to happen to Jesus, they know that he has said that he is going away and that they cannot follow. They are troubled and Jesus encourages them with a promise of a Helper, meaning the Holy Spirit. This also points to how the elect will be saved and matured going forward, through the help of the Holy Spirt.

Church, without the Holy Spirit in-dwelling a saved saint then they are not able to know God, understand the Scriptures or grow in Christ likeness.

**1 Corinthians 2:14**

**14The 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.**

**Ephesians 4:17-24**

[**17**](http://biblehub.com/ephesians/4-17.htm)**Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds.**[**18**](http://biblehub.com/ephesians/4-18.htm)**They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.**[**19**](http://biblehub.com/ephesians/4-19.htm)**They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.**[**20**](http://biblehub.com/ephesians/4-20.htm)**But that is not the way you learned Christ!—**[**21**](http://biblehub.com/ephesians/4-21.htm)**assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus,**[**22**](http://biblehub.com/ephesians/4-22.htm)**to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires,**[**23**](http://biblehub.com/ephesians/4-23.htm)**and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,**[**24**](http://biblehub.com/ephesians/4-24.htm)**and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.**

The natural man, meaning a person that has not been saved is unable to discern the scriptures because it is the Holy Spirit that allows a person to do so. Once we have the Holy Spirit then the scriptures are opened to us and we are able to learn and grow.

Paul explains this wonderful truth in his first letter to the Corinthians.

**1 Corinthians 2:6-13**

[**6**](http://biblehub.com/1_corinthians/2-6.htm)**Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away.**[**7**](http://biblehub.com/1_corinthians/2-7.htm)**But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory.**[**8**](http://biblehub.com/1_corinthians/2-8.htm)**None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.**[**9**](http://biblehub.com/1_corinthians/2-9.htm)**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”—**

[**10**](http://biblehub.com/1_corinthians/2-10.htm)**these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.**[**11**](http://biblehub.com/1_corinthians/2-11.htm)**For who knows a person’s thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.**[**12**](http://biblehub.com/1_corinthians/2-12.htm)**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**](http://biblehub.com/1_corinthians/2-13.htm)**And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.**

Let me repeat that last verse.

[**13**](http://biblehub.com/1_corinthians/2-13.htm)**And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.**

That is pretty clear, isn’t it. Paul tells the church in Corinth that he is teaching them wisdom that is taught by the Holy spirit, he calls the wisdom, spiritual truths imparted to those that are spiritual.

Church, praise God for the ministry of the Holy Spirit in allowing us to understand Holy Scripture.

Our next point naturally flows out of the first.

1. **The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin.**

When we say that the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin it is important to understand what the word “convicts” means. I took the following definition from the Webster’s Dictionary of 1828.

**CONVICT, verb transitive [Latin , to vanquish or subdue.]**

**To convince of sin; to prove or determine to be guilty, as by the conscience.**

So, we could restate this point as “the Holy Spirit proves to us that we are guilty of sin”, it makes our conscience aware that we are doing wrong. And how does it do this?

Let’s look back at the Gospel of John to begin to answer that.

**John 16:8a**

**And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin….**

This verse is in the latter portion of what is known as the farewell discourse. Chapters 14 to 17 of the Gospel of John consists of instructions, encouragement, and prayer that Jesus gives to the 11 disciples after the departure of Judas and prior to His arrest.

Earlier we reviewed verses in Chapter 14 in which Jesus promised the Holy Spirt as our Helper. Now in Chapter 16 verse 8 he is explaining other works of the Holy Spirit, and he tells the 11 that the Holy Spirit will convict the world concerning sin.

There is another primary way that the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, and this is tied to our first point of the lesson.

As the Scriptures are opened to our understanding by the Holy Spirit, we come to know what sin is. We can test our ideas against the teachings of God that are revealed through the prophets and apostles as they wrote the Scriptures while they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

**2 Peter 1:21**

**21For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.**

**2 Timothy 3:16-17**

**16All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.**

When we look at these verses from second Timothy it is profitable to slow down and understand what is being conveyed to us, specifically the phrase “breathed out by God”.

I found the following explanation on Bibleref.com.

**The description here of God's word is the Greek *theopneustos*. This is very literally translated as "God-breathed." Human authors put the words to paper, through their own personal perspectives and styles. But the ultimate source of this information is not human, but divine. The Greek language makes this particular description even more layered. The Greek root word *pneo*is used for wind, breath, a spirit, or "the" Spirit. This is a wordplay Jesus uses when speaking to Nicodemus (**[**John 3:8**](https://www.bibleref.com/John/3/John-3-8.html)**). In a symbolic sense, in Greek, the word Paul uses is a model of the Bible itself: an extension of God's will, formed out of His spirit, in written form.**

So, church, the same Spirit who inspired the human authors of Scripture, is the same Spirit who allows us to understand Scripture. And as we see the profit of Scripture in teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness, we are further and further convicted of sin in our lives.

We need to understand the blessing this ministry of the Holy Spirit is for us. Conviction of sin is not condemnation for sin. The Holy Spirits work of convicting us of sin is part of our heavenly Father’s loving discipline to help us grow in holiness. Know that if you are being motivated by shame and guilt over your sin this is not the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, we repent and turn again to Christ our savior, who died for our sins and clothed us in His perfect righteousness. And when we have once again been reminded of our saviors love for us, we in turn obey out of love for Him.

This is an integral part of progressive sanctification, but since we have a whole lesson coming up on that topic, I will not dig deeper into it.

Next, we move on to points two and three.

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

Our reference verse for these two points is Romans 8:26.

**Romans 8:26**

**26Likewise 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 verse begins by saying that the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. This is a reference to both physical and spiritual weakness. Due to sin our bodies, minds, and spirits have been subjected to sickness, forgetfulness, doubt, pain, sorrow, and the list goes on. The Holy Spirit is the conduit of God’s loving kindness to us in helping us or comforting us through these things.

I will once again refer to the Gospel of John during the farewell discourse.

**John 16:7**

**7Nevertheless, 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.**

Jesus is telling the disciples that it is better for Him to go away so that the promised Helper can come. This had to be hard for the disciples to hear but they did not have the advantage of living in a New Covenant world in which Christ’s work was complete and the Holy Spirit given as the seal of our salvation and as our Helper or as it is rendered in the King James Version our Comforter.

**John 16:7 (KJV)**

**7Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.**

Listen to the way this term is described in an except from Bibleref.com.

**"Helper," here, is translated from the root term paraklētos. This can also be translated as a "comforter," or "advocate." This is the same term John will use later to describe Jesus in 1 John 2:1. That connection has meaning—Jesus will later point out that He is leaving behind His earthly ministry specifically so the Holy Spirit can act (John 16:7). The Holy Spirit, in a sense, does from the inside what Christ would do from the outside: teach, convict, remind, and guide.**

So we see clearly from scripture that the Holy Spirit is our comforter. But how does He comfort us? One of the most clearly stated answers to that question is found earlier in Romans 8, verses 15 and 16

**Romans 8:15-16 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” 16The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,**

The Holy Spirit comforts us with the assurance of our salvation and all of the promises included in it. No matter how bad things are in the world around us, when we know that we are children of God, we will be comforted.

Church it should be of great encouragement to us that we have the Great Parakletos, the Holy Spirit to teach, convict, remind, and guide us.

Amen

Going back to our reference verse we see our fourth point spoken of, the Holy Spirit prays for us.

**Romans 8:26**

**26Likewise 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.**

God the Holy Spirit is one with God the Father and God the Son. God knows us and our needs better than we can ever know them. He knows our desires, He knows our faults, He knows our strengths and weaknesses. But most importantly He knows something that apart from Scripture, we cannot know ourselves, and that is His will for our lives.

Belonging to Jesus Christ means that He will fulfill all His offices in your life. We studied these offices recently in midweek so hopefully this is fresh in your memory, but those three offices are Prophet, Priest, and King. It is easy to see Jesus Christ as savior, but do you also see him as your King? With Christ as your King your life is subject to His rule. This means that if we are to pray in accordance with His rule, we test our prayers against scripture to see if they align. But what if we are discouraged or can’t find the words or praying about something that isn’t directly addressed in Scripture. This is where we need His priestly office.

What if you are a husband and wife that desires to have a child but have not been able to conceive. How do you find the words to pray for God’s will in your life if you don’t know that your desire for a child is God’s will for your life?

The Holy Spirit intercedes for you, with groaning too deep for words. That term could be translated “wordless groanings”. It gives the picture of something that is indescribable so there are no words to put it into.

This is comforting to me church, and I hope it is comforting to you as well. You do not need to be a great orator to pray, you don’t have to use the most words, or be extra convincing. The Holy Spirit intercedes for you in your prayer. Let that sink in for a minute.

Ok, now we will move on to our fifth point.

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

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 go 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 gives 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 to the saints but 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.

We will now move to our last two points of Question 95.

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

If we were to go back and review all the Scriptures, we have looked at tonight then we may already be able to answer these two points.

We know that the Holy Spirit in dwells us at regeneration and gives us new spiritual eyes to understand and believe the Scripture. At the same time, we are given a new heart that is put out of step with the world and in step with the ways of God. Sin no longer tastes good to us, we are lead by the Spirit as we seek to apply what He is revealing through the teaching and study of God’s Word.

One word that stuck out to me in our sixth point was the word desire. I did some research on the word desire and how it appears in the Bible.

One search I did showed the word used in 70 passages of Scripture. And when you dig a little deeper you find the word “desire” is translated from multiple root words in Hebrew and Greek and these root words can be broken down in six basic categories.

These are:

1. Delighting in.
2. Longing, Yearning, Craving, or Lusting for.
3. Good Pleasure, Good Purpose or Good Will.
4. The Will in Action
5. To Seek After
6. As Prayer

I found this study of the types of desire in Holy Scripture to be helpful, especially if I slow down and apply them to myself in relation to God and my obedience to Him.

So, let’s try this out.

The point from our catechism answer says that the Holy Spirit gives us a desire and ability to obey God.

This means that the Holy Spirit makes me delight in God.

The Holy Spirit makes me long for or yearn for God.

We can go down the whole list and it only gets better.

The Holy Spirit gives me a Will in Action for God. This reeks of progressive sanctification, so I will leave that for the coming lesson.

I think you get the point, but I encourage you to look at this list later and do business with how your desires all six of them line up with God’s revealed will in Scripture.

Now I want to share an excerpt from a book by John Piper called Desiring God. It is one of the first books I read as a new Christian, and I would highly recommend it to you. In this passage Piper is helping us understand a changed heart that desires God.

**“Once we had no delight in God, and Christ was just a vague historical figure. What we enjoyed was food and friendships and productivity and investments and vacations and hobbies and games and reading and shopping and sex and sports and TV and travel…. But not God. He was an idea – even a good one – and a topic for discussion; but He was not a treasure of delight.**

**Then something miraculous happened. It was like the opening of the eyes of the blind during the golden dawn. First the stunned silence before the unspeakable beauty of holiness. Then the shock and terror that we had actually loved darkness. Then the settling stillness of joy that this is the soul’s end. The quest is over. We would give anything if we might be granted to live in the presence of this glory for ever and ever.**

**And then faith – The confidence that Christ has made a way for me, a sinner, to live in His glorious followship forever, the confidence that if I come to God through Christ, he will give me the desire of my heart to share His holiness and behold His glory.”**

Piper is describing the conversion experience, the beauty of new life in Christ. Church, this same picture of desire for God that Piper describes is the same desire that the Holy Spirit is providing to you. Your desires should be fueled by the work of the Holy Spirit in your life. Through knowing God more, you will desire Him more. If you are not enamored with your God, then I would say you aren’t looking long enough or close enough at the very gifts you have been given in salvation and the Scriptures.

To round out Question 95 I will quickly address our last point.

How does the Holy Spirit Lead us?

1. Conviction of Sin
2. Teaches us the word of truth
3. Helps us in Prayer
4. Changes our desires
5. Repeat, repeat, repeat

Now we will move to Question 96.

**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 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.**

**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.

The Christian life can be summed up by our love for God being expressed 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.

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.