

The Holy Spirit - Part 5

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[0:00] And welcome back to our class on the Holy Spirit. Okay, so let me just start again with just a brief overview as we normally have.

! We've been considering the doctrine of the Holy Spirit under what two big headings? Do you remember? The what of the Holy Spirit and the what of the Holy Spirit? The person and the... Yes, and what's the second one?

The work of the Holy Spirit. Yeah, so the person of work. We spent a few weeks talking about the person of the Holy Spirit. And last week, we began our study of the work of the Holy Spirit. And first, remember, we looked at the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus, noting how Jesus' whole life from conception to resurrection was lived in the presence and power of the Spirit.

And that led us to the conclusion that the work of the Holy Spirit is always Christocentric, centered and focused on Christ. And we said that, you know, the kind of operating principle that we see in the New Testament is that what the Son accomplished in the power of the Spirit?

The Spirit now applies to us to the glory of the Son. And from there, with that kind of foundation, we asked the first question, which was, how do we come to hear and know about the accomplished work of Christ for us?

[1:12] And that led us to consider the work of God the Holy Spirit in making known to us the things of God and of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And remember, that led us into a discussion of the work of the Holy Spirit in proclamation and the work of the Holy Spirit in inspiration, or better yet, expiration.

But then we thought that that maybe wasn't the most felicitous term to describe Scripture. And illumination, right? The Holy Spirit bringing us to really understand these things. And we found at the end, great comfort in the fact that the Holy Spirit isn't making it hard for us to hear His voice speaking and testifying about Jesus.

In fact, He has literally given it to us in black and white in the pages of Scripture, where He continues not just to speak, but to enable us to understand and to proclaim the message of Jesus afresh.

Okay, so that was last week. We looked at how we come to know these things. That brings us to our topic today. Because after we've considered the Holy Spirit's work in Revelation, in making Christ known to us, that raises a second question, doesn't it?

How do we come, not just to hear the message for ourselves, to maybe understand it intellectually, to know the words, how do we come to actually embrace it and believe it and receive Christ for ourselves?

[2:40] John Calvin asked the question this way in the Institutes. He said, how do we receive those benefits which the Father bestowed on His only begotten Son, not for Christ's private use, but that He might enrich poor and needy men?

See what Calvin's asking there? All the benefits of God's salvation are found in Christ for us. How do we come to receive them for ourselves? And Calvin's answer was this.

It is the effective operation of the Spirit by which we come to enjoy Christ and all His benefits. John Owen, the 17th century English theologian and pastor, put it this way.

He said, and you've got to love John Owen, because John Owen, I think, dreamed in Latin. So when he wrote in English, the sentence structure is sort of long and arduous, but it's like eating a steak.

It's wonderful. Or a rich piece of tofu, if you're a vegetarian. Anyway, Owen writes this. He says, there is not any spiritual or saving good from first to last communicated unto us, or that we are from and by the grace of God made partakers of, but it is revealed and bestowed on us by the Holy

Ghost.

[4:02] See what he's saying there? There's no spiritual good that comes to us. There's nothing of the grace of God that we are made partakers of from first to last, but that it doesn't come to us, isn't revealed to us, and bestowed on us by the Holy Spirit.

Okay, so according to these teachers from yesteryear, they point us to the truth that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to bring us into personal union with Christ.

So we're going to look today at how the Holy Spirit does his work of bringing us into saving union with Jesus. I wasn't sure what word to use to title this, but we can talk about the work of the Holy Spirit in union with Christ.

We'll call it that. And we're going to consider this under four headings. We're really looking at how the Christian life begins under the power of the Holy Spirit. We're going to look at this in four headings.

The first one that I've written here is conviction, conviction. In John 16, 8 through 11, Jesus says this. He says, And when the comforter of the Holy Spirit comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.

[5:13] Concerning sin, because they do not believe in me. Concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer. Concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

That's John 16, 8 through 11. You know, part of the tragedy of the fall, and part of the kind of what we might call the sinfulness of sin, is that in our sinful condition, we don't even realize that we're sinners.

Our hearts are blinded to the fact that we're at enmity with God, and that we're dead in sin. Even more so, we're sort of like the patient who goes to the doctor, and the doctor tells us that we're in a serious condition, and we're diagnosed with a terminal disease, and yet, we refuse to believe it. So, the Holy Spirit's initial work in our salvation is to bring us to the place where we realize that we are in need of a Savior.

This is what Jesus describes here in John 16, when he says that the Holy Spirit will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment. Now, the word conviction, in relation to sort of negative matters, means sort of convincing a person of error, persuading a person of being in the wrong, declaring a person to be guilty.

[6:24] Conviction is sort of like a sort of spotlight shining for the first time, bringing clarity, and helping us to see that something is indeed true.

And Jesus says that the Holy Spirit will convict the world, that is, fallen human beings, concerning three things, sin and righteousness and judgment. First, he says, concerning sin, because they do not believe in me.

Now, I think most people, right, most people will admit they aren't perfect, right? You know, I haven't met someone who says like, nah, I'm a pretty great guy, actually.

I'm perfect. No one says that, right? Some people may even think that if there was a God, and God was to judge them, they would, most people would probably say that they would fall short, right? Some people would, anyway. But, when the Holy Spirit brings true conviction of sin, we realize that the greatest sin of all isn't sort of breaking these little rules or not measuring up to other people.

[7:25] We start to realize that the greatest sin of all is failing to trust and to follow Jesus Christ. We begin to understand that sin isn't just about breaking rules, but it's about relationally rejecting God and Christ.

Sin is, at its heart, worshiping something or someone else as our God and refusing Jesus. That's why it says the Holy Spirit will convict us concerning sin.

Jesus says, because they do not believe in me. The Holy Spirit will begin to bring us to the heart of what sin really is. Second, the Holy Spirit convicts concerning righteousness. Jesus says, because I go to the Father and you will see me no longer.

Now, what is the solution to our sin, right? Is it trying harder? Is it taking up more good works? Is it kind of adding more religious commitments or activities to our schedule?

Well, Jesus says that the Holy Spirit will convict us that these efforts at self-righteousness are futile. Instead, he helps us to see in Christ himself who has gone to the Father.

[8:33] Jesus says, I'm going to the Father, right? The Holy Spirit helps us to see in Christ who has gone to the Father the true standard of righteousness. And that means that both our

self-righteousness is exposed, but also the righteousness of Christ, we see that as the only thing that could save us.

In other words, by convicting us of righteousness, the Holy Spirit is showing us what we really need and that it can only be found in Christ. And third, the Holy Spirit, Jesus says, will convict concerning judgment because the ruler of this world is cast out.

You know, left to ourselves, right? Most of us will live for the moment and not think about ultimate things, right? But the Holy Spirit in his convicting work helps us to see that God's perfect justice will one day be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Because Christ died on the cross, Satan, the ruler of this world, is a defeated foe. He's cast out. And one day, Christ will complete his saving judgment when he casts out every remnant of evil and injustice in this world.

So the Holy Spirit comes and convicts us of this coming judgment, brings us to the conviction that our lives will stand before God, right? And that we will give an account one day to our Creator.

[9:49] And for those who are in Christ, they will be found righteous on Christ's account. But those who stand in their own self-righteousness and thus still in their sin will be condemned on the last day and will be cast out of God's presence.

So it is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict us of the coming reality of this judgment, a judgment that will heal and restore the world, but also will remove all evil and sin from that world.

Now, okay, this work of conviction, even though the Holy Spirit is convicting us of some heavy and weighty things, isn't it actually good news?

Isn't this work of conviction actually a wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit? Remember our illustration of the terminally ill patient who refuses to believe that they're sick? That's a terrible condition to be in, right?

But God and His great love for us helps us to see our need for salvation through the work of the Holy Spirit. And of course, the Holy Spirit continues His work of conviction in the lives of believers, does He not?

[10:54] The Holy Spirit continues to show us areas of sin and hard-heartedness and unbelief that remain in us. And He shows us those areas so that we might repent of them and grow in Christ's likeness.

The disturbing work of the Spirit, that convicting work of the Spirit, is always for our good. So as the psalmist says, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.

The Holy Spirit helps us first to see the bad news of our sin so that we might come to embrace the good news of our salvation. You see, denying or avoiding our sin will only lead to sorrow, but agreeing with the Holy Spirit's convicting work will bring ultimate joy.

Okay, so that is the Holy Spirit's work of conviction. Next, that brings us to our second heading, regeneration. Regeneration also, the Bible talks about this as being born again.

Born again. What is regeneration? Well, let's start with a definition. This is a definition from a theologian named Anthony Hokema in a book, *Saved by Grace*.

[12:04] He says, regeneration may be defined as that work of the Holy Spirit whereby He initially brings persons into living union with Christ, changing their hearts so that they, who were spiritually dead, become spiritually alive.

now able and willing to repent of sin, believe the gospel, and serve the Lord. The work of the Holy Spirit whereby we who were spiritually dead become spiritually alive, now able and willing to repent of sin, believe the gospel, and serve the Lord.

Jesus Himself teaches this, and He teaches the necessity of this in John 3, 1-8. Let's read John 3, 1-8. Let me read this for us.

It says, Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.

Now how do you think Jesus would answer that? Thanks, you're right. Interesting. Jesus, always one, to get right to the heart of the matter, answers Him, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

[13:36] Nicodemus said to Him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born? It's interesting, the text doesn't say how old Nicodemus is, but I sort of like to think of Nicodemus as an old, wise Pharisee coming to Jesus and saying,

Jesus, if being born is the prerequisite, those days are long gone for me.

He's confused. Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of flesh is flesh. That which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.

Do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born again. The wind blows where it wishes and you hear its sound and you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is, everyone who is born of the Spirit.

Okay, so according to Jesus, a person can neither see nor enter the kingdom of God unless they are born again.

And this regeneration isn't something that we can bring about for ourselves, right? It's something that God does.

[14:47] And in that, Nicodemus was onto something, right? How can this be, Jesus? I couldn't go back and be reborn from my mother. No, it is not something we can do. It is something that God does. Earlier in John's Gospel, chapter 1, verse 13, John wrote that those who believe the good news are born not of natural descent, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but they are born of God.

And in this passage, John 3, we see that it's particularly the work of God, the Holy Spirit, who brings about this new birth, right? Now, what does Jesus mean in verse 5 when he says that unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God?

What is Jesus talking about there? What does that mean? Well, there are a couple things that Jesus doesn't mean that maybe would be first guesses at that. You know, maybe we think Jesus is talking about baptism here, water baptism, the external sign, as if maybe we must be baptized with water and transformed by the Spirit in order to enter the kingdom.

But that actually isn't what Jesus is mentioning here. Nor is Jesus talking about physical birth here, as if Jesus is saying, well, you have to be born by the natural processes of childbirth from a mother, right?

Born of water. And you have to be born by the Spirit. That also isn't what Jesus means. So what is he talking about? What does Jesus mean when he says we have to be born of water and the Spirit?

[16:13] And how can we be sure that he's not talking about either one of those things? Well, because it seems pretty certain that in verse 5 of John 3, Jesus is referencing an Old Testament prophecy from Ezekiel.

Listen to Ezekiel 36. 25 through 27. Ezekiel says, I will sprinkle, well, the Lord says through Ezekiel, I will sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness and from all your idols.

I will cleanse you 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 I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. You see, Jesus is alluding to this passage where the sprinkling of water is a metaphor for God cleansing his people from their sin.

And in this passage from Ezekiel, you can see that the cleansing from sin and the giving of a new heart by the spirit are really one complete action by God, you see. So Jesus isn't talking about two things in John 3, water baptism plus the spirit's renewal, physical birth plus spiritual birth.

[17:22] Rather, he's talking about one thing he's talking about this renewing, cleansing, regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. Now, the rest of the New Testament sheds light on this regenerating work of the Spirit.

We could look at a passage like 1 Peter 1, 23 through 25, where we see that the Holy Spirit does this work of regeneration in concert with the Word of God proclaimed.

Listen to what Peter writes. He says, he's writing to Christians, he says, you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through what?

Through the living and abiding Word of God. Right? The Holy Spirit's agency comes to regenerate us as the Word is preached. Peter goes on, he says, for all flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass.

The grass withers and the flower falls, but the Word of the Lord remains forever. And Peter says, and this Word is the good news that was preached to you.

[18:26] Right? The good news of the Gospel is that living and abiding Word through which the Holy Spirit does His sovereign regenerating work.

Compare that with what Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 1, 4 and 5. He says, for I know, brothers, loved by God, that He has chosen you because our Gospel came to you not only in Word but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.

So as the Gospel is preached, the Holy Spirit works sovereignly to do exactly what Jesus describes in John 3 and in fulfillment of Ezekiel 36. The Holy Spirit brings us from spiritual death to spiritual life.

He causes us to come alive spiritually, removing our old sinful nature and implanting a new nature. Once our life was characterized by selfishness, rebellion, or indifference toward God, sinfulness, disregard for others, the like, but in its place is a new self, this new life, this new identity that is expressing Christlikeness, love for God, holiness, love for others.

Paul picks up on the theme of washing in connection with regeneration as well. In Titus 3, 5-6, he writes, but when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he 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 whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.

[19:55] Okay, so how does the Holy Spirit bring us to believe in Christ and unite us to him? first thing we see is that the Holy Spirit, he doesn't just convict us of sin, but he actually causes a profound inward spiritual transformation.

He causes us to be born again. He gives us a new spiritual principle within, a new heart that now sees, understands, and believes the things of the gospel.

And that leads us to our third heading to conversion. we just saw that regeneration is the work of God the Holy Spirit in us, right?

He does it just as we don't give ourselves birth physically so we don't give birth to ourselves spiritually, right? God alone regenerates the fallen human heart through the proclamation of the gospel and the inner working of the spirit as he effectually does his work.

At the same time though, the Holy Spirit's work of regeneration through the gospel is met by a corresponding human response that we call conversion. And conversion includes two aspects, repentance and faith.

[21:09] Repentance and faith. Repentance from sin and faith in Jesus Christ whom born again people confess as their Lord. So let's consider first repentance.

You know, we might define repentance like this. Repentance is changing one's mind and life. It involves an acknowledgement that one's thoughts, words, and actions are sinful and thus grievous to God.

It involves a sorrow for sin and a decision to break with sin. So repentance you see is turning away. And it's turning away not merely from particular sins but turning away at a profound level from our self-reliance and our self-justification.

It means admitting that we have not merely committed sins but we are sinners in need of a Savior. And of course without the Holy Spirit's help we can't do this on our own, right?

In ourselves we're dead in our trespasses and sins. We're enslaved to the things of this world. But as the gospel goes forth of Christ crucified and risen for us and for our salvation and as the Holy Spirit causes us through hearing that word to be born again we are graciously empowered and enabled to acknowledge our sinful condition and turn away from it.

[22:26] And in the life of a Christian who's been born again repentance does take some concrete shapes doesn't it? We'll begin turning away from particular sins right?

As that work goes on. We'll forsake things that are displeasing to God. Consider the example of Zacchaeus in Luke 19.8. Do you remember who Zacchaeus was? He was a wee little man right? And a wee little man was he. And he went up in a sycamore tree Jesus the Lord to see. And Jesus said Zacchaeus you come down right? For you're going to my house today right?

And how does Zacchaeus respond? This tax collector this outcast right? He was very small right? That's why he had to climb a tree to see Jesus come by right?

But after hearing the call of Jesus that I'm coming to your house Zacchaeus today I'm choosing you I'm going to express my love for you Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord behold Lord the half of my goods I give to the poor and if I have defrauded anyone of anything which he probably had as a

tax collector I restore it fourfold and seeing that response of turning away from his old life to himself Jesus says today salvation has come to this house since he also is the son of Abraham and then Jesus says this for the son of man came to seek and to save the lost Yeah yeah that's right and that brings us to our next point doesn't it we turn from sin right?

[24:13] but the other half of conversion is faith we're turning to Christ we might define faith in this way faith is it's belief and personal trust it involves an understanding of the person and work of Christ to provide salvation an assent to one's need for forgiveness and a decision to trust Christ personally to save we understand things we assent to them and then there's that personal decision to trust him personally as our savior now just as repentance is a human response that the Holy Spirit enables so too faith is something that we can't merely sort of conjure up on our own right?

in Ephesians 2:8 and 9 Paul writes for by grace you have been saved through faith what beautiful news and then he says and this is not your own doing it is the gift of God not a result of work so that no one can boast faith's a gift to us it's something that is granted to us as Philippians 1:29 says Paul says for it's been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him so belief is granted to us but also suffer for his sake right?

follow him on the road of taking up our cross and following him so believing in Christ trusting in him coming to faith in him is something that's granted to us it is God the Holy Spirit working with our spirit liberating our spirit so that we might believe we see an example of this in Acts 16 you remember where Paul is in Acts 16 what city is Paul in in 16 remember in Philippi yes good Richard Philippi and Luke writes this when he gives an account of their time in Philippi he says they went out to the group of those who were praying outside the city he says one who heard us was a woman named Lydia she was from the city of Thyatira a seller of purple goods purple goods were like really fancy in the ancient world because it was really hard to make purple dye I think you had to like find like snail shells crush them it's a really arduous work so purple dye was like really expensive really valuable and it was something that only like the wealthiest of the wealthy could afford that's why purple was a royal color actually okay anyway so this is this is

Lydia's business right so she's a very savvy probably very successful businesswoman okay so one who heard us was a woman named Lydia from the city of Thyatira seller of purple goods who was a worshiper of God that means that she was a Gentile right a worshiper of God meant that you were you kind of believed in Israel's God but maybe you hadn't done the whole way to do like sort of a full conversion into Judaism so she was a God okay Lydia seller of purple goods who was a worshiper of God and then Luke writes this he says the Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul and after she was baptized in her household as well she urged us saying if you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord come to my house and stay she prevailed upon us so interesting interesting isn't this passage so interesting here's Lydia right Lydia successful in the world's eyes has it all kind of together also she's kind of got it together religiously too right she's not following all these pagan!

pagan temples and gods no she worships the one true God of Israel and still for Lydia the Lord has to be the one to open her heart to really hear and pay attention and to understand the things of the gospel right and hallelujah that's what the spirit does right the Lord by the spirit opens her heart so that she pays attention to what was said by Paul she gives it her full trust right Martin Luther wrote this in his small catechism he says I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him but the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel enlightened me with his gifts sanctified and kept me in the true faith so friends conversion is a work of the Holy Spirit in us whereby he enables us to repent of sin and trust in Christ unlike regeneration right which [28:43] God the Holy Spirit alone does in our hearts conversion is something we do in concert with the Spirit in obedience to the call of the gospel to repent and believe and of course this call to turn and to trust right that the kingdom of God was near and wasn't that such a wonderful phrase that Jesus used how was it near well as the gospels unfold we find that it was near because he was the king right and at Pentecost when the crowds asked

Peter what they have to do in response to his sermon about Jesus death and resurrection that he is now the exalted king what does Peter say they say what do we do Peter he says repent every one of you and be baptized so that your sins might be forgiven so that you might receive the gift of the Holy Spirit yeah okay so how does the Holy Spirit work to bring us to saving union with Christ when the gospel is proclaimed he convicts he regenerates and he brings about the fruit of repentance and faith and that brings us to our fourth heading which is union with Christ union with Christ you know if

Paul you start seeing it everywhere right you start seeing it everywhere again and again what does it mean what does it mean to be in Christ right that's right yes yeah yeah that total right to be in Christ right means that we are united to Christ united to Christ both what we might say covenantally we are under now his headship right as our king and also spiritually there's a vital union that we have with Jesus and in that covenantal and spiritual union with Jesus now what is true the beautiful thing is now what is true of

to unpack in that! little paragraph! Christ is in you Christ is in you right?

[illegible]

It's as if you are seated with him in the heavenly places because where Christ is, you are, right?

[36:01] No, you're seated with Christ in the heavenly places. That's what's true of you because you're united to him through faith by the Holy Spirit. Now, we'll do a whole nother class on what it means to be seated with Christ in the heavenly places.

What's true of Christ is true of believers. And now that means that it is through this union with Christ that believers receive all the benefits of salvation, right?

And now it's like the floodgates open and every spiritual blessing is now ours in Jesus. Consider Ephesians 1: 3 through 14.

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going to read this for us.

If you want to turn there, you can. Ephesians 1, 3, Ephesians 1, 3 through 14. Paul writes this. He says, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us, how?

In Christ. With every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. And aren't spiritual blessings, at the end of the day, so much better than material blessings? Right? Material blessings, they run out, they fade.

The moth corrupts and destroys, as Jesus says. Right? Spiritual blessings never go old, right? Just think of all the people in the world who have everything, and yet know that in their souls, they have nothing.

Ah, but in Christ, we have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. Let's keep going. Even as the Father chose us. How? In him.

[38:06] In Christ, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love, he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the beloved.

That's Christ. That's what he means. Everything you can lose in the world, but he, you can never. Never lose it. Yep, that's right. Speech as you can. Everything you have, you have it forever.

Like, not mine. Right. Absolutely. Let's keep going. In him, in Christ, we have redemption through his blood. Redemption, freedom, liberty. Right? We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he trickled on us just a little bit.

Oh, no, that's not what it says. Which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight, making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time.

You can see Paul's gaze rising, right? Up. He's looking out at the great horizon of redemption as a plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in Christ, things in heaven, and things on earth in him.

[39:21] The total healing of the fabric of the broken world, healed in Christ, united in him. In him, in Christ, we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.

Now listen to this. This next verse kind of summarizes everything I've been trying to say this morning. In Christ, you also, when you heard the word of truth, when you heard the word of truth, right?

It came to you. You've heard it. And then, it wasn't just a word of truth, but through the Holy Spirit, it's working, you came to see that it was the gospel of your salvation.

In him, you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and what? Believed in him. You were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.

The Spirit didn't just come and go, but was engrafted into you, sealed upon you. Who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it to the praise of his glory?

[40:33] So friends, through union with Christ, we are chosen, we are adopted, we are redeemed, we are forgiven, we are included in God's plan to unite all things. We're sealed with his Spirit. We're granted an eternal inheritance.

I mean, we could keep going throughout Paul's, this was just three paragraphs. Actually, it was one long sentence. You know? We could keep going. We could consider how justification, our being declared righteous before God, though we are sinners, being declared righteous, we could see how that wonderful, foundational reality of the gospel is a blessing of our union with Christ.

How is it that Christ's righteousness becomes ours? Is this some kind of legal fiction? Is it some sort of ruse? No. If you are married to someone, what is true of them is true of you, legally, personally, relationally, right?

So it is with us in Christ. His righteousness is now ours because we are united to him through the Spirit by faith. We could consider how our adoption is a blessing of our union with Christ, right?

Not only is Christ the righteous one, clothing his people with righteousness, so Christ is the true Son of God, allowing us wayward lost sheep to become not just subjects in the kingdom of God, but sons and daughters, right?

[41:45] Granted an inheritance, Paul says. Right? Like children. We could consider how our future resurrection and glorification are a blessing of our union with Christ.

All the salvations of blessing flow to us through our union with Christ, and that union is affected by the gracious and powerful working of the Holy Spirit. As he convicts us of sin, righteousness, and judgment, as he regenerates our spiritually dead hearts so that we might repent and believe, and as he unites us to Christ through faith, dwelling in us so that we might dwell in him, and so that we might enjoy these spiritual blessings forever.

We have just a couple minutes. I want to conclude with a couple words of application. One second, Julia. By way of application, I want to conclude with 2 Corinthians 5.17. Paul writes this. He says, Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

The old has passed away, the new has come. So I think the first question all this just pushes upon us is, friends, are you in Christ? Has the Holy Spirit convicted you of sin?

Have you come to repent and trust in Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and for eternal life? If not, then you are not beyond hope or help because God the Holy Spirit, cry out to God the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to these realities.

[43:10] Ask him to come and do his work in your soul. And if you hear his voice, don't harden your heart. Second, if you are in Christ through faith, you, friend, are a new creation.

So much of the application of the New Testament boils down to this. This is sort of the core ethical thrust of the New Testament. Basically, it's all the apostles saying, be who you are in Christ.

Be who you are. The Holy Spirit has given you new life. In Christ, you are a new creation. Now go, be who you are. Live the new creation life that you are by the Holy Spirit.

So we might ask, now that we are united to Christ, how is the Holy Spirit calling us to live more in line with who we are in Christ? And will you and I pray for more of the Holy Spirit's help to do just that?

Well, friends, okay, that brings us to the end of our class today. And actually, with that last little bit, points us ahead to next week. Next week, the question we're going to raise is this. How then, being united to Christ, how do we grow more and more into Christlikeness?

[44:20] And that is the question of sanctification. Beth and I are going to be out of town next week. We're going to be up the road at Shoreline, one of the churches that we helped plant many, many years ago.

So we'll be out of town. But, John Hinkson will be teaching next week, so you won't want to miss it. So be sure to come back next week. Okay, let's, we have like five minutes for questions. So much time for questions.

Anybody have questions? Yeah. Yeah. So I know it's not super simple, but is there any sense as to how long each step of this would take? Are we instantaneous? Is it possible?

Yeah, yeah. About, you know, 17 minutes each is about, is about the time through much study and scientific endeavor. We've just, that's a great question, Chris.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. You know, it's very interesting. These things that we've charted out here, these are true. of every genuine Christian.

[45:17] But, each of us has a unique story and a unique path to these things. Some people are, you know, I hesitate to kind of lay these out at stages. I sort of did just for like teaching purposes, right?

But, you know, for some people, like, this happens really quick. Beth and I were just, just met with someone last Sunday where they said, you know, I was in high school and kind of grew up nominally Catholic and I didn't really believe any of it.

I had a friend who was like a Christian and I would, I would like basically just like tease him about like creation and stuff like that. And then he sent me this video. He sent me this three hour long video talking about the Christian view of creation.

And throughout the whole video, he wasn't just talking about evolution and creation and science. He kept talking about the gospel. He kept talking about Jesus. And by the end of the video, I realized I was a believer. Wow, that happened really fast, right?

For others, it's a long journey, right? For others, you know, for some of us, we can look at a very distinct moment and say, man, I felt very distinctly the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

[46:22] I was repenting and believing. I look back and I just think that's when God brought me to new life, right? For others, it's a season, right? You know, I started thinking about things here.

This sort of thing happened and then it was this and then it was this and then it was this and then I found that a couple years later, holy smokes, I actually think Jesus is the risen Son of God and He did die for my sins.

Where did the work of conviction and regeneration happen in that long journey to faith? Somewhere in here, right? The wind blows where it will and you know it not, right?

The Spirit does His work. So, is that helpful? Yeah. So, we don't want to be too rigid in like, the like locking down what has to be this, this, this, and this, and this, and this, right?

What's true of every Christian, if you are repenting and believing in Jesus, if you're a knight to Him, then the Holy Spirit has brought you to conviction and He has caused you to be born again and you are repenting and believing, right? So, yeah, Beth, go ahead.

[47 : 26] Do you think within that sort of organic reality of like being a human being engaging on our spiritual encounter of God, that there is this moment where you kind of have to like step over the line to say, that there is a distinction of being like outside the people of God and then stepping to like, or as someone might say, like, the intellectual ascent that a chair is a chair and it's able to hold you up and actually sit in the chair?

Yeah, yeah, yeah. I think that's a vital part of faith, right? It's not just sort of ascent, right?

There is a volitional aspect of faith, right? There's a decision that we make. We cross over a line, right? Now, it's interesting, for some people who come to faith gradually, right, it can be hard to like say like, well, when, what was the day and time when I put my trust in Jesus, right?

I think this is where baptism becomes such a gift to us because in baptism you are literally getting dunked in water. You are literally making a public profession with your whole self, right?

So, is baptism what saves you? Is baptism sort of like equal to the decision of saving faith? No, but it is an expression of it, right? So, I think baptism is a gift in that way.

[48 : 51] It gives us that sort of that kind of stake in the ground moment. that says, I am identifying with my Lord. Yeah. Does that make sense, Beth? Yeah. Yes.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And isn't baptism a wonderful picture of that? It's like our whole self going down and up in the water that Christ is all. Yes, virgin.

Yeah. Uh-oh, 57. That means I only have 12 years left, Julia. Yikes.

I hope the Lord preserves me longer than that. Any other questions? Maybe we have time for, maybe one more, maybe two more. Yeah. Yeah, Jonathan.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Sure. interesting. Oh, interesting.

[49 : 59] Yeah. Uh-huh. Yeah, I don't know. I haven't thought about that, actually. Yeah, yep. It is interesting, though, that the Spirit's work is often talked about.

Like we looked at that passage from Ezekiel where it's like, I'm going to cleanse you with water and you'll be clean. And that's sort of this outward metaphor for this inward sort of cleansing that the Holy Spirit brings. Paul says the same thing in Titus, that you've been washed by the regeneration of the Spirit.

So there's something about the Spirit's work that is likened to the cleansing of water. But I don't know. I'd have to think about like, is the flesh and blood kind of like thing, a spirit and water sort of thing, right?

I don't know. That's good. I mean, certainly for Jesus, right, like he was tying those together, I think, certainly on the basis of that Ezekiel passage, right, that we're born of spirit and water, right? That it's that cleansing work of the Spirit that brings us into a new spiritual life.

Yeah. Yeah. Any other questions? Thoughts? Observations? All right.

[51 : 08] Let's close then. And we'll head for worship next door. Let me pray for us. Father, thank you again for the work of your Spirit.

Lord, opening our eyes, giving us the ability to repent and believe. Jesus, we are so grateful that you have fulfilled your promise to send your Spirit so that we might be united to you and enjoy every spiritual blessing with you in heavenly places.

Pray for my brothers and sisters here that we would indeed walk in these great truths. We pray this in your mighty name. Amen. Amen. All right, friends. We'll see you next door. Amen. Amen.