**Lesson 11**

**The Spirit’s Gift of Faith**

The principal bond uniting Christ and His people is the Holy Spirit. And the means by which the Spirit unites Christ’s bride to her bridegroom is faith. But the faith that unites us to Christ and saves our soul is not merely a natural act of mentally assenting to the gospel, but is a supernatural act produced by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In the process of regeneration our salvation begins with the quickening of the Spirit, imparting spiritual life to a dead soul. From there the soul begins to act spiritually by the drawing of the Holy Spirit until, finally, the Spirit gives us faith that results in our being “born again,” or converted to saving faith.

**What is “saving faith”?**

Like the subject of **drawing**, the subject of faith is very mysterious and often misunderstood. John Calvin makes the statement that it is possible to have faith in Jesus Christ and yet not have saving faith. The parable of the soils (Matthew 13:3-8; 18-23) affirms Calvin’s statement by pointing to the fact that 2 of the 3 soils in which the seed fell were sufficient for the seed to grow for a time but were ultimately insufficient to sustain it. In the same way many professing Christians appear to demonstrate saving faith, only to eventually fall away because the “soil” of their hearts is unable to sustain spiritual life.

“In ordinary conversation, “faith” signifies credence or the assent of the mind to some testimony. But according to God’s Word saving faith goes beyond a mere natural act of the mind. It includes the concurrence of the will and an action of the affections . . .

***Romans 10:9-10— 9 if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; 10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.***

“Were people to perceive more clearly the implications and the precise character of saving faith, they would be the more readily convinced that it is “the gift of God,” an effect or fruit of the Spirit’s operations on the heart.

* Saving faith is a coming to Christ, and coming to Christ necessarily presupposes a forsaking of all that stands opposed to Him. It has been rightly said that “true faith includes in it the renunciation of the flesh as well as the reception of the Savior; true faith admires the precepts of holiness as well as the glory of the Savior” (J. H. Thornwell, 1850).

**Saving Faith is the work of the Holy Spirit**

***2 Corinthians 1:21-22— 21 Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, 22 who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.***

The ground and reason why the Christian believes Scripture to be the Word of God is neither the authority of the church (as Roman Catholicism teaches), nor the smooth and eloquent words of the evangelist, but rather (and solely!) the testimony and power of the Holy Spirit.

* Men may present persuasive arguments that will so convince the intellect as to cause a ready consent. But persuasive words cannot establish the soul and conscience so as to assure the heart of the divine authorship of the Bible.
* Spiritual life must be imparted before the foundational work of God’s Word is able to form a firm foundation for faith.

The Holy Spirit establishes faith in the quickened soul in two important ways.

**First**, the Spirit gives the quickened soul that ability to have faith in the truth of God’s Word.

* The same blessed Spirit Who moved holy men of old to write the Word of God, works in the regenerate a faith that nothing can shatter.
* The Holy Spirit causes the quickened soul to see such a divine Majesty shining forth in the Scriptures that the renewed soul is made to burst forth with both joy and conviction that Holy Scripture must be divine.
* “No born-again soul needs any labored argument to convince him of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures: he has proof within himself of their heavenly origin. Faith wrought in the heart by the power of the Spirit is that which satisfies its possessor that the Scriptures are none other than the Word of the living God.

**Question:** Do you remember your reaction when you believed that the Bible was truly God’s word?

**Second**, the Holy Spirit gives the quickened soul the ability to believe in Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior.

* Not only does the blessed Spirit work faith in the *written* Word, establishing the renewed heart in its divine veracity and authority, but He also produces faith in the *personal* Word, the Lord Jesus Christ.
* “When the soul has been divinely awakened and convicted of sin, it is brought to realize and feel its depravity and vileness, its awful guilt and criminality, its utter unfitness to approach a holy God. It is emptied of self-righteousness and self-esteem, and is brought into the dust of self- abasement and self-condemnation. Dark indeed is the cloud that now hangs over it: hope is completely abandoned and despair fills the heart. The painful consciousness that divine goodness has been abused, divine Law trodden under foot, and divine patience trifled with, excludes the expectation of any mercy.”

**Question:** Do you remember when gave up all hope in any inherent righteousness in yourself and threw yourself at the foot of the cross and sought the face of your Savior?

The two ways the Spirit works faith in the quickened soul . . . the ability to believe God’s word and the ability to believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior . . . are evidence that natural man has no ability to save himself nor even contribute anything to his salvation.

* Just as the Holy Spirit, alone, has the power to regenerate a dead soul, so the Holy Spirit, alone, has the power to impart faith to an unbelieving heart. Man has no ability to believe without the empowerment of the Spirit working in him.

**How the Spirit works saving faith**

Many preachers and teachers love to teach that in the process of receiving salvation that God woos the sinner to Christ with sweet words of comfort and encouragement. Many attempt evangelism with the theme that “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.” But Arthur Pink paints a different picture.

* The problem with the view that man contributes anything to his salvation is that it appeals to man’s flesh. We like to think that we have some value or worth to God that causes Him to go out from Himself to woo us to Himself. In fact, everything in us is foul and putrid and totally unworthy of Him. And until we see ourselves as He sees us . . . as we really are . . . we are prone to this prideful idea that we have some value to God.
* “When the soul has sunk into the mire of despair, no human power is sufficient to lift it out and set it upon the Rock. Now that the renewed sinner perceives that not only are all his past actions transgressions of God’s Law, but that his very heart is desperately wicked—polluting his very prayers and tears of contrition—he feels that he must inevitably perish. If he hears the gospel, he tells himself that its glad tidings are not for such an abandoned wretch as he; if he reads the Word, he is assured that only its fearful denunciations and woes are his legitimate portion. If godly friends remind him that Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10), he supposes they are ignorant of the extremities of his case.”
* “In those in whom the Spirit works faith, He first blows down the building of human pretensions, demolishes the walls that were built with the untempered mortar of man’s own righteousness, and destroys the foundations that were laid in self-flattery and natural sufficiency, so that they are entirely shut up to Christ and God’s free grace. Once awakened, instead of fondly imagining I am the man whom God will save, I am now convinced that I am the one who must be damned.”

***1 Corinthians 3:16— Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?***

* Before the Holy Spirit can build a human soul into a temple in which He can dwell He must first tear down the old rotten building. Then, establishing a new, perfect foundation the Spirit then builds a temple suitable for His habitation, built on faith in Christ and on the Word of God.

**The Spirit Unites Us to Christ**

One of the principal ends or designs of the gospel is the communication to God’s elect of those benefits or blessings that are in the Redeemer; but the communication of benefits necessarily implies communion, and all communion as necessarily presupposes union with His Person.

“There are two kinds of union between Christ and His people: a judicial and a vital, or a legal and a spiritual.

**a.** Judicial/legal union— Our judicial/legal union to Christ is our justification. “It is that union which was made by God between the Redeemer and the redeemed when He was appointed their federal Head. It was a union in law, in consequence of which He represented them and was responsible for them, the benefits of His transactions redounding to them.”

**b.** Vital/spiritual union— “Christ is in the believer by His Spirit; the believer is in Christ by faith. Christ is in the believer by inhabitation; the believer is in Christ by implantation (Rom 6:3-5). Christ is in the believer as the head is in the body; we are in Christ as the members are in the head.”

In light of their roles within the **economic Trinity**, it appears that both God the Father and God the Holy Spirit are instrumental in uniting believers to Christ.

* In regard to the judicial/legal union to Christ, it is God the Father who justifies. It is God the Father who applies the blood of the Savior in declaring the redeemed “not guilty” of their sin because His Son, Jesus, has paid the redemption price for us.
* In regard to the vital/spiritual union to Christ, it is God the Holy Spirit who quickens, draws and gives faith to those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior, thus uniting the redeemed to their Savior by faith through His indwelling presence.

The spiritual union of the elect to the Savior is begun in the process of regeneration. Beginning with the quickening of the dead soul to spiritual life, the Spirit then draws and ultimately converts the new life.

* As we have seen over the past several weeks, it is the **drawing** and **working of faith** by the Holy Spirit that sinners are saved.
* “Spiritual union with Christ, then, is accomplished both by the *external* preaching of the gospel and the *internal* “drawing” of the Spirit.

**The Indwelling of the Spirit**

The possession of the Holy Spirit is the distinguishing mark of a Christian, for to be without the Spirit is proof positive that we are out of Christ.

If we have Christ for our Redeemer, then we have the Holy Spirit for our Indweller. But if we have not the Spirit, we are not Christ’s.

* We may be members of His visible “church,” we may be externally united to Him by association with His people, but unless we are partakers of that vital union which arises from the indwelling of the Spirit, we are His only by name.

**“Visiting” vs. “Indwelling”**

Matthew Henry— “The Spirit **visits** many who are unregenerate, with His motions, which they resist and quench. But in all that are sanctified He **dwells**. There He resides and rules. He is there as a man at his own house, where He is constant and welcome, and has dominion.

***1 Corinthians 3:16— Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?***

***Galatians 4:6— Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"***

* “Observe where the Spirit is said to dwell: not in the understanding—the fatal error of many—but in the heart.
* Most certainly He enlightens the understanding with truth, but He does not rest there. He makes His way to, and takes up His abode in, the renewed and sanctified heart.

**The Basis for the Spirit’s Indwelling**

“The basis upon which the Spirit takes up His abode within the believer is twofold: first, on the ground of redemption. This is illustrated most blessedly in the cleansing of the leper—a figure of the sinner.

There must be moral fitness as well. The Spirit of God will not tabernacle with unbelieving rebels. When by repudiating all idols, receiving Christ as Lord, trusting in the merits of His sacrifice, the heart is prepared, the Spirit of God enters to take possession for Christ’s use. When we give up ourselves to the Lord, He accepts the dedication by making our bodies the temples of the Holy Spirit, there to maintain His interests against all the opposition of the devil.”

**What “Indwelling” Denotes**

Arthur Pink states that there are three things that denote the Spirit’s “indwelling” a regenerated Christian: **intimacy, constancy,** and **sovereignty**.

**Intimacy**— As the inhabitant of a house is more familiar there than elsewhere, so is the Spirit in the hearts of Christ’s redeemed. He is in believers not simply by the effects of common Providence, but by His gracious operations and familiar presence.

***“Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (Joh 14:17).***

**Constancy**— “dwelling” expresses a permanent abode.

* The Spirit does not affect the regenerate by a transient action only, or come “upon” them occasionally as He did the Prophets of old, when He endowed them for some particular service above the measure of their ordinary ability—but He abides in them by working such effects as are lasting.
* He comes to the believer not as a Visitor, but as an Inhabitant: He is within us ***“a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (Joh 4:14)***. He lives in the renewed heart so that by His constant and continual influence He maintains the life of grace in us.

**Sovereignty**— this is also denoted under the term “dwell.” He is owner of the house, and not an underling.

* From the fact that the believer’s body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle points out the necessary implication that he is ***“not his own” (1Co 6:19)***. Previously he was possessed by another owner, Satan. This is evidenced by the statement of the evil spirit in Matthew 12:44, when he says, ***“I will return into my house.”***
* But the Spirit has dispossessed him, and the sanctified heart has become *His* “house,” where He commands and governs after His own will.

**The role of the Indwelling Spirit**

1. The indwelling Spirit is the bond by which believers are **presently** united to Christ.

* As we learned in the previous section, **the Spirit uniting to Christ**,the believer is presently in Christ by the faith which the Spirit provides.

2, The indwelling Spirit is also the *certain pledge and earnest* of our **future** eternal inheritance.

***2 Corinthians 1:22—“Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.”***

***Ephesians 1:13b-14— 13 . . . having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.***

**The Evidence of the Spirit’s Indwelling**

1. First, wherever the Spirit dwells, He does in some degree *mortify* and subdue the evils of the soul in which He resides. ***“The Spirit [lusts] against the flesh” (Gal 5:17)***, and believers ***“through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body” (Rom 8:13)***.

* This is one special part of His sanctifying work. Though He kills not sin in believers, He subdues it; though He does not subdue the flesh as that it never troubles or defiles them anymore, its dominion is taken away. Perfect freedom from its very presence awaits them in heaven; but even now, animated by their holy Indweller, Christians deny themselves and use the means of grace that God has appointed for deliverance from the reigning power of sin.

2. Second, wherever the Spirit dwells, He produces a spirit of *prayer* and supplication.

***Romans 8:26— In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words;***

* The two things are inseparable: wherever He is poured out as the Spirit of *grace*, He is also poured out as the Spirit of *supplication* (Zec. 12:10).
* He helps Christians *before* they pray by stirring up their spiritual affections and stimulating holy desires.
* He helps them *in* prayer by teaching them to ask for those things that are according to God’s will.
* He it is Who humbles the pride of their hearts, moves their sluggish wills, and out of weakness makes them strong. He helps them *after* prayer by quickening hope and patience to wait for God’s answers.

3. Third, wherever the Spirit dwells He works a heavenly and *spiritual frame of mind*.

***Romans 8:5-6— 5 For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,***

* The workings of every creature follow the being and bent of its nature. If God, Christ, heaven, engage the thoughts and affections of the soul, the Spirit of God is there.

**Question:** A question that has the been the subject of much debate among Christians . . . did the Holy Spirit indwell believers in the Old Testament?

**Reply:** The main reason people don’t believe the Holy Spirit indwelt believers in the Old Testament is because Jesus Christ had not yet come. And since He had not yet come, how could the Holy Spirit be a bond between the believer and Christ?

Though the Old Testament believers did not know the time or identity of Jesus, all the believers of the Old Testament were like Abraham . . . they believed God and it was this faith that was reckoned to them as righteousness. And as we have seen in this lesson, there are many ministries of the indwelling Spirit that can be wrought on both the Old and the New Testament saints. He mortifies sin, he produces a spirit of prayer and supplication, and he works a heavenly and spiritual frame of mind in all whom He indwells.