

“Have You Learned the Secret?” (part 3)

THE SECRET OF CONTENTMENT

Today we continued our series on “Have You Learned the Secret?” Have you learned the secret to finding contentment and satisfaction in this life? Unlike the world, the answer is not found in people, places, or things, it’s found in a relationship; a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul knew this. That’s why he could write from prison, ***“Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord...I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have the learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”*** (Philippians 3:7-8; 4:12-13).

UNDERSTANDING THE MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

We then looked last week, at the way we actually experience contentment – through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. When we turn to and accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts. No one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit, and no one say Jesus be cursed if the Holy Spirit is within them. And it is by faith that we accept Christ as Lord.

And it is that faith that provides the conduit for the Spirit to enter us and keep us in relationship with Almighty God and enable us to live for God. But once we receive the Holy Spirit the challenge for each of us is to be controlled by the Spirit. We will not have learned the secret of satisfaction and contentment if we are not controlled by God’s Spirit. And if we are controlled by the Spirit then what will happen? I will be bearing the fruit of the Spirit. ***Galatians 5:22-23: “By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.*** And if the fruit of the Holy Spirit is in my life than I will indeed be a content person. And being controlled by the Spirit means walking in the Spirit. The two feet are repentance and faith. ***“Walk in the Spirit and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh.”***

WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

Now what I would like to do today is look more closely at the role the Holy Spirit plays in our lives. To go into more detail concerning the experiential relationship with Christ that is experienced through the work of the Spirit. Last week, I briefly touched on the fact that as Christians we believe that the Father is God, Jesus the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. They are distinct as Persons, but all the same God. This understanding is called the Trinity.

We affirm this belief every Sunday when we say the Nicene Creed. While we can’t fully comprehend this in the natural realm there are some ways to understand it. For example water can be found as a gas, a liquid or a solid, yet it is always H₂O. Fire is a better example. With fire there is always the flame, heat, and light. You can’t have one without the other. That’s why we shouldn’t be surprised that **Hebrews 13:29** tells us that ***“Our God is a consuming fire.”***

The Trinity is one of the main truths of Scripture that separates Christianity from all religions and cults. As Christians we understand the the Holy Spirit to be a “Person” with a mind, will, and emotions, not merely the power of God, though it encompasses that. Such an understanding is contrary to Islam (which believes

Allah is Spirit but no belief in the Father, the Son, or Holy Spirit), Judaism (Spirit is just another name for God), the so-called Christian cults like the Mormons (the Holy Spirit is a divine influence or electricity like emanation from God), Jehovah’s Witnesses (the Holy Spirit is the invisible active force of Jehovah) and Christian Science (the Spirit is impersonal power), and the rest of the world’s religions.

So how do we know that the Holy Spirit is not simply the divine energy of God or simply the power of God?

ANOTHER ADVOCATE

Let’s look again at the words of Jesus On the night before He died Jesus said, ***“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate. To be with you forever.” This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him or knows him. You know Him, because He abides with you, and he will be in you...”*** (Jn. 14:15-17).

The word, “another” means another of the same kind. An “Advocate” is someone who “pleads one’s cause or case.” It’s a legal term. It is another way to say, “Lawyer.” Jesus is our Advocate before the Father (see 1 Jn. 2:1: ***If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.***) Jesus represents us before the Father, and when the devil gets on our case and accuses us, we can just say, “See my lawyer.”

But now notice that the Holy Spirit is also our Advocate. But He doesn’t represent us before the Father, He represents Jesus to us: ***“I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives.*** (Jn. 14:25-27).

“I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, “Where are you going?” But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because they do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.” (Jn. 16:5-11)

“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.” (Jn. 16:12-15).

The Holy Spirit takes the things of Christ and makes them known to us. He pleads the cause of Jesus Christ in me and He is taking the things of Christ and making them real. You see, in Bible times every tribe had a tribal advocate and that tribal advocate there was to plead the cause of that particular tribe or family, that advocate was there to protect the family name, that advocate was there to protect the interest of that particular family. Now, I want to tell you that one of the supreme functions of the Holy Spirit is to make Jesus in us all that he was to the disciples and even more. You see, it is only through the Holy Spirit that we can really know Jesus.

And Jesus says that he must go. Why? When Jesus was on earth He was only able to be in one place at one time. Remember Martha, when her brother Lazarus had died? She said, “**Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died.**” Jesus was limited by His body. But not so with the Holy Spirit. Now Jesus can be just as real to us as He was to the disciples who walked with Him, no matter where we are or where we go. Jesus can be within me here in New York, just as much as He is within my Christian brothers and sisters in China. Jesus now lives in us. How? By and through the Holy Spirit.

So the Holy Spirit comes to comfort, to strengthen, to give us wisdom and guide us into all truth. But more importantly, to be Jesus in us! And He is not going to lead us into contradicting the Will of the Father or the Son. There are some in the Church who say that the Holy Spirit is revealing new truths to His Church. There are no new spiritual truths and if they contradict the Word of God, they are wrong.

So when we accept Christ, it is the Holy Spirit who enters us. And it is only the Holy Spirit that enables us to understand the wisdom of God and live for God.

UNDERSTANDING THE WISDOM OF GOD

Please turn now to p. 1039, to **1 Cor. 2:10-16**.

“Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish. But we speak God’s wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, ‘What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him’— these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God’s except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual.”

Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God’s Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are discerned spiritually. Those who are spiritual discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else’s scrutiny. ‘For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?’ But we have the mind of Christ.”

Note that the Apostle Paul also talks about how apart from the Spirit of God we cannot understand God’s wisdom. And when we have the Spirit of God we have the mind of Christ. It is through the Holy Spirit that we can understand spiritual things. Without the Spirit, the things of God are foolishness to the nonbeliever.

Now if the Holy Spirit lives in us, how then should we live? In Romans Paul tells us that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit. So we need to be careful how we live.

DO NOT GRIEVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

Please turn with me to **Ephesians 4:25-32**:

“So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make room for the devil. Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as”

to have something to share with the needy. Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.”

How do we grieve the Holy Spirit? By doing wrong, by committing sin. How do we get rid of our sin? Repentance and confession. As soon as you recognize that you are doing wrong, confess it to the Lord. **1 Jn. 1:9** says, *“If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

BUT BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

After we put away the sin, what’s the answer? We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. The Greek verb **“be filled”** means to do so on a continual basis.

“Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil. So do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Eph. 5:15-20).

How are we filled? By dealing with sin and then accepting by faith God’s forgiveness. And then doing the things that are pleasing to God. Spending time with the Lord in His Word, in prayer, by fellowship, by praise God in song, and by being obedient. **Col. 3:12-17**. *“And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”*

THE SECRET OF CONTENTMENT IS BEING FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

So the key to living a content filled life is making sure you are right with God and then making sure that you are filled by His Holy Spirit. Salvation is a one time gift we receive by faith. But growing in our salvation is something we need to do everyday. It is done by repentance and faith. A faith that seeks forgiveness and a faith that obeys. And when this is true in our lives then we can say like Paul, *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”* In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, AMEN!