

Our Spiritual Journey: Growing and Serving

Scripture Reference: Ephesians 3:14-19

As with a physical child that is born, a spiritual babe must grow, develop, and mature in order to have a healthy and productive life. Two other Scripture readings were considered for introducing this section of our series (Ephesians 1:15-23; Colossians 1:9-22), but both of them never mentioned the Spirit. The emphasis was on Christ instead. That serves as an illustration of how the Spirit works. He does not emphasize Himself. He draws more attention to Christ (John 14:13-14). Perhaps, for this reason, people tend to overlook or underestimate the involvement of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

The work of the “*Paraclete*” – John 14:15-26

“*Paraclete*” is an English version of the Greek word for an advocate, advisor, or helper. It can be used to describe an attorney / lawyer, who would stand beside you, advising you, and speaking for you in court. The word means “*someone who is called to stand by you and give you aid.*” It is translated “*Comforter,*” “*Helper,*” and “*Advocate.*” Four times in the New Testament, it refers to the Holy Spirit (John 14:15,26; 15:26; 16:7 cp. Romans 8:26). Once, it refers to Christ (I John 2:1 cp. John 14:18). A different form of this word is used in the New Testament, which means “*comfort*” (Matthew 5:4; II Corinthians 1:3-4).

The indwelling Spirit of God teaches, guides, warns, encourages, strengthens, liberates, fills, and equips us. He illuminates us with Scripture. He develops character by producing Christ-like fruit in our lives. He calls us to service. He connects us with God through prayer and meditation. He connects us with God’s children through spiritual unity and gospel fellowship.

Over the centuries, the ministry of the Holy Spirit has been perceived and handled incorrectly by many. The Holy Spirit has been reduced to a force or influence that is mainly obtained through the formality of sacraments, using water, wine / grape juice, and bread – along with other forms of ritual. Others have required a steady show of the supernatural, seeking visions, dreams, prophecies, signs, miracles, speaking unknown languages, and sometimes doing unusual physical and emotional behavior. We will try to respectfully deal with some of these things, later, when we discuss being filled with the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit. But for now, we offer Scripture that shows the real and personal evidence and actions of the third person of the Trinity – who works lovingly and powerfully in the lives of God’s children (Romans 8:5-9).

Some believe good doctrine about the Holy Spirit, but they do not apply it to their lives. This makes their spiritual journey more difficult and less fruitful. May the following Scriptures be helpful to bringing you joy, peace, courage, and direction in your life.

Consider these Scriptures:

- John 7:37-39 (cp. 4:10,14); 16:12-14
- Acts 1:8; 4:8-13,31-33; 13:1-4,49-52
- Romans 5:1-5; 8:2,8-16,26-27; 14:17-18; 15:13
- I Corinthians 2:1-5,9-16
- II Corinthians 1:21-22; 6:1,3-6... etc.; 13:14
- Galatians 4:6; 5:16-25
- Ephesians 3:14-19; 4:1-6; 5:18-21; 6:18
- I Thessalonians 1:5
- I Timothy 4:1-3
- I John 2:18-29 ("*anointing / unction*" = the ministry of Holy Spirit) cp. 3:23-24
- Jude 1:17-21

Let's summarize with a few basic words:

Presence – The Holy Spirit gives us vital connection with God. He establishes communion / fellowship / partnership (a working relationship). He causes the Word to speak to us personally and leads us to pray and obey.

Power – The Holy Spirit gives us spiritual life through the new birth. He anoints us with power and directs us in service to God. Power can be described as resolve and boldness, with authority.

Purity – The Holy Spirit sanctifies us – separates our hearts and minds from worldly thinking and passions. He gives us power over temptation and weakness. He moves us towards heavenly thoughts and passions, so that we love what God loves and hate what God hates.

Progress – The Holy Spirit leads us to begin a process of growing in grace and knowledge. With maturity comes desire and skill to yield ourselves to God's service and the care of others.

Purpose – The Holy Spirit gives us a sense of belonging and a sense of direction in our lives. The security of belonging to God's family and the call to serve in Christ's kingdom puts meaning and a sense of destiny in our lives. All things are working together for a greater good. We always have hope. We may always look forward – not escaping from reality, but escaping into it!