

This is tape number SHS310. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references are quoted from King James Version.

We will continue our study on the subject of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. In this lesson we would like to look at the work of the Spirit in conforming us into the image of Jesus Christ.

God has placed certain ministries in the church. Paul declares first of all, that there were the apostles, and then some prophets, some evangelists and some pastor/teachers. These are various gifted individuals within the church that God has placed within the body for the purpose of the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry. Paul declared that he was an apostle not by the will of man, but by the will of God. He also asked the rhetorical question: Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Do all heal? Are all pastor/teachers? And the answer is obviously, No. There are these many different ministries within the church, but the purpose is the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, which is the building up of the body of Christ.

And so, that is really why we are here tonight. To study the Word in order that there might be a perfecting of the saints and that you might be edified—built up in Jesus Christ. The Lord wants to bring all of us into a full maturity in our Christian walk. There are too many Christians who have really never developed spiritually. They have what could be classified as an arrested state of spiritual development that began when they were about two months old in the Lord. Paul speaks to them as babes in Christ. He said that he had fed them with the milk of the Word and not with meat, for they were not able to bear the meat and were still not able to take it. The writer to the Hebrews said,

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. (Hebrews 5:12)

Now milk is a good and proper diet for babies, but there should be a development. There should be a growth in our Christian experience. Peter wrote and said, “As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the Word” (1 Peter 2:2). There is nothing wrong with that for babies. But the time comes when a child needs to be weaned from the bottle and begin to eat meat. And this is true in a spiritual sense. There needs to be a development—a growth in our walk in the Spirit.

Paul tells us here in Ephesians 4, that “till we all come to the unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man.” The word *perfect* there is fully matured. Until we come into a fully matured state. And what is the mark of that fully matured state? “...unto the stature, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13).

Infancy is a natural state after birth. There is nothing wrong with being a babe in Christ for a while. But when you have been around for twenty-five years and you are still in diapers and holding on to your bottle, it does not take the gift of discernment to understand that something is radically wrong. You should have developed. You should have grown during that time.

Now Paul tells us God has predestined that we should be conformed to the image of His Son. In the beginning, we read that God created man and Scripture declares that He created him in His likeness and after His image. When God said, “Let us make man in our own image, after our own likeness,” God is a spirit and thus He was referring to that spiritual aspect of man’s being. So man

is created in the image of God. God's chief moral characteristic is righteousness and thus He created us with a desire for righteousness. God's chief governmental characteristic is self-determination, so God created you as self-determinate being. He gave to you the capacity of choice. God's chief emotional characteristic is love. And He created us with the capacity of giving and receiving love. So we are created in the image of God. We have a desire for righteousness, the capacity to choose, and the ability to love and to receive love.

Now man fell from the image of God. He became selfish, cold, indifferent, and vengeful. And thus to understand the real purpose of God in the creation of man, you cannot really look around at mankind today and understand God's divine intent in the creation of man. This is a mistake that many people make. They look at fallen man in his fallen state, and then they question the goodness and the love of God that would create such a man. Look at him, how horrible he is! He has the capacities to do so much evil and how could a God of love create such a horrible creature as man? You do not see God's intent by looking around at man today, because you see man in his fallen state. You do not see what God intended man to be.

Now the Bible describes man in the fallen state. Romans 1:29, Paul said,

Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, and unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. (Romans 1:29-32)

This is a pretty sad state. When you look at it, it is pretty sad to see the condition of man when he turns his back on God. And it is amazing when a man turns his back on God and the love of God and the things of God, how deep he can go into moral depravity.

In writing the second letter to Timothy, Paul gives him a list too saying,

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men will be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof. (2 Timothy 3:2)

Now, when you read that list, I can assure you, that was not God's intention for man. That is not the way God intended us to live. To know and to understand God's intention for man, you have to look at Jesus Christ. And in Jesus Christ you see the intention of God for man. He lived as God would have us to live. You see the Bible tells us concerning Jesus that He was the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person. So that Jesus came and lived in the image of God and in the likeness of God. In His life He demonstrated to us what God is like and thus, how God created man in His image and how God intended and desires men to live. We read:

And the Word was made flesh and He dwelt among us and we beheld his glory, as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

And then in 2 Corinthians 4:4 Paul said,

In whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God...

So you see how God created man when you look at Jesus Christ. He is the image of God. God created man in His image. And so, you also see how far man has fallen from the original divine intent of creation. God did not intend that we live as we are living today. God did not intend that man be living after the flesh—soulish and sensual. That is not God's intention. Jesus said to Philip,

He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father. (John 14:9)

Christ was and did live in the express image of God. In Colossians 1:15 Paul said,

Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.

Now is it God's desire and purpose to take us fallen creatures and to restore us back into His image. God wants to nullify the effect of sin and the fall of man and to restore us once more into the image of God. And so Paul said in Romans,

Therefore brethren, we are debtors not to the flesh to live after the flesh. For if you live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. (Romans 8:12-13)

You will live as God intended you to live. Romans 13:14 says,

But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lust thereof.

God does not want us living sensual, fleshly lives. He wants us to live a life in the Spirit and after the Spirit. And in Galatians 5:16-17 Paul said,

This I say then, walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh: For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh and these are contrary the one to the other so that you cannot do the things that ye would.

Galatians 5:24 says,

And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and the lusts.

Colossians 3:5-10 says,

Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience: in the which ye also walked some time when ye lived in them. But now also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, and filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not to one another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.

So, God wants you to put off the old man, the old nature, the corrupt nature, which is corrupted by sin. And He wants you to put on the new man.

If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Jesus said to Nicodemus,

Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. (John 3:3)

There has to be a new birth, a new man. You put off the old man. By the power of the Spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh. You are no longer living after the flesh, but you are now living after the Spirit and the things of the Spirit.

Now we see the new man in Christ contrasted with the old man after the flesh. And when I see the ideal—I look at Jesus and I read of the characteristics and I observe His characteristics. He was kind. He was sensitive. He was compassionate. He was merciful. He was forgiving. And when I see these characteristics, I say, “Oh, yes! That is how I want to live.” I hate it when I get in the flesh and do ugly things. The flesh is so ugly and distasteful. And I desire the ideal. When I read the contrasting list, I say, “Oh God, deliver me from the flesh, from all of the anger and malice and strife and envy and bitterness and all of those horrible things that are destructive. God, deliver me from that!” I desire to be very compassionate, loving, giving, kind. I long to be like Jesus.

But as Paul said,

I know that in me, that is in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not. (Romans 7:18)

And that is the problem—how to perform that which is good. We see the ideal, desire the ideal, but our inability to attain the ideal is frustrating. That is one of the problems with the religions of the world. Buddha pointed to an ideal. Buddha, in a sense, was on track in many ways. Buddha maintained that man's problems came from his desire for material things. And as long as you were mastered by the desire for material things you were always going to be upset, angry,

warring, and filled with strife. This desire to grasp material things is sort of the idea that the Scripture says,

For the love of money is the root of all evil. (1 Timothy 6:10)

And that lust and desire for money brings striving. It brings this envying and it brings jealousies and all of these negative things. And Buddha said the answer is to lose all desire for things material and if you can ever achieve and attain that state, where you have no desire for material things, even food, that you will then be in nirvana. It will be peaceful bliss: “I am happy. I am satisfied. I do not want a thing.” And so that, to Buddha, was nirvana.

Now in a sense, Jesus said the problem that we have with anger and all of these things does stem from the material life, the life of the flesh. And so, we need to live after the Spirit, for the life of the Spirit is superior to the life of the flesh. Jesus taught the superiority of the life of the Spirit over the life of the flesh, much as did Buddha. One vast difference is that Buddha pointed to the path that would bring you to nirvana, but he had no capacity to help you walk that path. So that just gets frustrating.

A few years ago we had the king of Laos visiting here at Calvary Chapel. He was here with his cabinet and we had a large group of Laotian people, who had come to meet the king of Laos, who had come to Orange County to talk to the Laotian population here. I was asked to explain to the king and to his cabinet and to the Laotian people that were here, what Christianity was all about. And it was a beautiful opportunity to share. Now the Laotian people were basically Buddhist. And so, like Paul the Apostle, I started on their turf.

When Paul was in Athens he said, “I perceive that you are very religious people. I have been going through your city and I found idols, you know, to everything. And I even passed one altar and it was inscribed, ‘to the unknown god.’ I would like to tell you about this God. He is the one that created the heavens and the earth.” And so Paul started on their turf, but he led them into his own turf.

So, I started talking to the Laotian people about a lot of the things of Buddha—his teaching, the basic philosophies and all of Buddha’s teaching. And then I brought out how he taught about a good way of life. It would be wonderful if people actually could follow the teaching of Buddha. It would be wonderful if people would be kind, and would be considerate, and would be giving, and did not have any desires for themselves. But the problem is that I have never met a Buddhist who could say, “Well, I am satisfied,” because none of them had attained nirvana. Because there is something within us (that fleshly nature), that though I may desire, see, or recognize that, *yes, this peaceful life would be good*—that it would be wonderful to be able to live like this, to never get angry, to never be upset, to always be in a happy, good frame of mind—try as I may, I am still living in this body of flesh and there is this warfare that is going on. And I do not always do the things that I would. And thus I get upset and frustrated.

Now Jesus said, this is how you are to live: after the Spirit, denying self, the self-life, taking up the cross, and following Him. But then He said, *Now I am going away, but I am not going to leave you without any help. I am going to pray to the Father and He is going to give to you another Helper, even the Spirit of Truth, that He may abide with you forever* (cf. John 14:16).

And Jesus promised that when we receive the Spirit we would, with the Spirit, receive the power of that Holy Spirit, dwelling in us, doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

So, the purpose of the Holy Spirit is to indwell your life and to give you the power to live as God would have you to live. As He, dwelling in you, working in you, does His works of conforming you into the image of God. He is restoring that which man lost as the result of sin. He is restoring man back into the image of God. Now this cannot be done by human resolve. It cannot be done by self-effort. Job said, “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?” No one. David said, “Oh that my ways were directed to keep Thy commandments.” Oh God, how I wished that this were so. That my ways were directed to keep Your commandments. And then he said, “Behold I have longed after Thy precepts.” I see them. I long after them. I admit and confess that they are right. I desire them.

So my dilemma: I love Jesus; I desire to be like Jesus; I want to be conformed into the image of God; I have a strong desire for these things. But my flesh is weak. And thus, Christians often find themselves in the state of great frustration, having the longing, seeing the ideal, desiring the ideal, but yet, defeated so often by the flesh. Must I always live in this condition of spiritual defeat? Thank God, the answer is no. There is true victory for every child of God.

When the children of Israel were led by Moses out of Egypt and journeyed through the wilderness to the Promised Land, their whole experience was an allegory and has parallels in the Christian life. They were saved by the blood of the lamb that was put on the doorpost of the house. They came out of Egypt, which is a type of the bondage in a life of sin. They came to the Red Sea, which is a symbol of baptism. And they began their journey through the wilderness towards the Promised Land. Unfortunately, when they came close to the border and close to entering in of the Promised Land, Moses made the mistake of sending in the spies to spy out the land. And ten came back with an evil report. Two spies came back with an encouraging report. But the people listened to the discouraging report and sought to get a leader to take them back to Egypt.

They said, “Our children will be killed. We will be destroyed. We cannot do it.” And God said, “Because you have failed to enter in you will wander for forty years in this wilderness until you have all died and the children whom you said would be as prey, they will go into the land.” And so, there began a long funeral procession for forty years, as they were waiting for everyone to die off of the old generation.

Finally after forty years, they came again to the border of the Promised Land, but this time having gone around, they came to the river Jordan. And coming through the river Jordan, God actually stopped the river and they came across the Jordan. This is a type of that place in your Christian experience where you are tired of wandering in the wilderness, which was marked by complaining, and murmuring, and just challenging God constantly. They came to Jordan, which is a type of the death of the old nature, the old man. That is the reckoning of my old nature to be dead, or the mortifying of the deeds of the flesh by the power of the Spirit. And they began to possess what God had promised, a new land—a land that was flowing with milk and honey.

They had a lot of battles in the wilderness, but they never gained anything from them. They never really gained any territory. Now there were still battles, but they were gaining territory all the while. When you come into this life in Christ, the life of the Spirit, there are still battles. There are still struggles, but our lives are now being directed by the Spirit of God. We are gaining territory all the time, as we are laying hold of the promises of God and possessing our possessions—those things that God has promised to us.

So, the Holy Spirit has been given to conform us into the image of Jesus Christ, to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. I find in my own life a very interesting pattern. And though I can observe it, I do not know why I just cannot seem to break it. God continues to show me areas of

my life that are not yet surrendered to the Spirit, where the next battle is going to be. You know, when we have taken Jericho, and Ai, and Bethel, but there is still a lot of territory that is not yet conquered. And the tragic story of the children of Israel is that they never did conquer all that God gave them. And I see those areas in my life. And thank God He did not show them all to me the first week or I would have been discouraged.

But just about the time you think you have arrived, just after a great victory, it is then the Lord shows you the next place. He shows you that area where the flesh still is dominant. And invariably, as the Lord will reveal to me—this area where He wants to work, I will say, “Oh Lord, that is horrible. Get out of the way and I will take care of that right now. I will not do that again.” And the Lord lets me flounder in trying to exercise my will-power, and my resolve, and my strength, and I keep stumbling. And after a period of time, I really begin to be almost defeated spiritually because of my inability to conquer this area of the flesh. Until I finally come in utter desperation and hopelessness and say, “God, I do not know what is wrong with me. I just cannot do it. God, You are going to have to help me.” And then the Spirit takes care of it and I have great victory. And the Lord shows me the next area and I say, “Oh Lord, get out of the way. I will take care of this right now. This is horrible. I did not realize this.” I mean, when am I going to learn? But it seems to be a pattern that fails. I have to get to the place of helplessness and confess, “Lord, I cannot do it.”

Now the net result of this is that as He does it, I have no place to boast in and of myself. I cannot go around bragging about how I conquered over this, or I used to do that, but I have determined that that was wrong, and I—See, I cannot boast. All I can tell you is that God can do a wonderful work where I was so weak, and He has done a beautiful work! And you know when God does it, so many times it is so beautiful that it is almost unconscious to you. You are not even aware of it until after a period of time and then you realize—*wow, I have not done that for a long time! I do not even want to do it. Isn't that glorious!* You know, and then you realize, oh Lord, You have given me the victory. Oh, bless Your name! That is wonderful!

We had a fellow here in the church who was a retired naval officer. And through the years in the navy he had learned navy talk and had a real foul tongue. But he came and accepted Jesus Christ here at Calvary Chapel. About six months after having accepted the Lord here, he was out in his backyard mowing the lawn—whistling, “Love, love, love, love. Christian this is your call.” And he was not paying close attention and he went under the tree, but he did not duck low enough and the thing caught him right in the forehead. It laid him on his back and his automatic lawnmower just kept going and hit the fence. And as he was lying there on the ground, pain throbbing on his forehead, he jumped up, ran over, turned off the lawnmower and went running into the house and said, “Honey, honey, guess what happened?” She looked at the big welt rising on his forehead and she said, “What did happen, sweetheart?” He said, “Oh no, no, not that.” He said, “I hit a tree, but,” he said, “I did not cuss.” And she said, “You know, I have not heard you use a swear word in six months.” He said, “I haven't?” I mean it was just one of those things. The Spirit does that you are not even aware of, but then what rejoicing there is in what God has done!

And I think that is why God so often lets us try. He lets us struggle. He lets us see our weakness, so that we will not go around boasting or bragging when he does it. He lets us get to the place of hopelessness and that recognition of total inability, so that when He then does work, we are careful to give Him praise and glory. This is victory through Jesus.

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians saying, “But we all with open face”—or unveiled face—he was talking about how, when Moses came down the mountain with the law, he had to veil his face, so the people did not see the shining or the fading of the glory that was on his face. But

Paul said that when the Jews read the law today there is still a veil over their faces. “But we with unveiled faces, beholding the glory of the Lord”—now you remember that is what caused Moses’ face to glow. He got a glimpse of God and it caused his face to glow. So, “we with unveiled faces beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed from glory to glory into the same image, by the power,” he said, “of His Spirit working in us.”

So here is the key: as we, with unveiled faces, begin to see the glory of the Lord—as we begin to worship the Lord, the Spirit of God reveals to us the glory of the eternal God. As we behold that glory, we are being changed—brought from glory to glory to glory—as we are being molded and changed into His image by His Spirit that is working in us. And so, the work of the Holy Spirit in your life is that of changing you from glory to glory, as He brings you into the image of Jesus Christ.

Now God says, basically, these are the laws by which you should live. These are the rules. This is the kind of a person you ought to be. These are the things you should be doing and these are the things you should not be doing. And if you do these things you will have a rich, full life in fellowship with Me. And I say, “good! I love it. I want it. I agree that is a good life and I will live that way.” And then I immediately discover that there is another law that is working in me that is fighting against the law of my spirit. Now God’s law is good. I consent to the law of God, that it is good. But how do I perform the law? How do I do what is right? How do I keep the ideal? I do not know. And that is the problem. I need the power of the Holy Spirit because I just cannot do it myself.

So, Paul then concludes in Romans 8:3 (“For what the law could not do”) that there was no fault with the law. The law is good. It is right. It is holy. I mean, it is the right way to live. But “what the law could not do...” What could the law not do? It could not give me the power to keep it. You see, I was still weak. I am still me. So though the law is good and I consent the law is good, the law cannot give me the power to keep it. It can only point an accusing finger at me when I am not keeping it.

So, the law could not make me righteous. It could only condemn me. “So what the law could not do, in that it was weak through my flesh”—that was the weak part of the chain, my flesh. That is where the whole thing broke down. The law is good. My flesh is rotten. My flesh is weak. “So what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh.” And then His Son sent me the Holy Spirit, and through the Spirit, He gave the power to live a life of victory over the baser desires of my flesh. I have received power through the Holy Spirit to be what God wants me to be and to do what God wants me to do. And through the power of the Holy Spirit, I am being transformed into the image of Jesus Christ.

Now I would be less than honest if I told you His job was finished. There is still a long way to go. But as the fellow said, I am not yet what I am going to be, but thank God I am not what I was. I am on the way. And I am experiencing in one area of my life after another, the power of the Holy Spirit, empowering me, changing me, transforming me into the image of Jesus Christ. I am growing.

Beware when you get to a place of becoming stagnant, when you cannot see any growth. And be doubly aware and concerned when you can look back and see a time when you were closer to the ideal than you are today. That is bad. See, I have not arrived, but I am closer today than I have ever been. And I have this confidence that He who has begun a good work in me is going to complete it. He does not start anything He does not finish.

And so, it is important for me to remain yielded to the Holy Spirit. It is important that I receive the power of the Holy Spirit—that power of the Spirit whereby I mortify the deeds of the flesh—that power of the Holy Spirit whereby I am transformed into the image of Jesus.

Shall we pray?

Father, we thank You for that work of Your Holy Spirit in us. Oh Lord, how grateful we are for all that You have done. Lord, when we see what we are today and we remember what we were— Oh Lord, we have come so far! We are so thankful. Lord, as David asked, we ask that You would continue Your work and search us, Oh God, and know our hearts. Try us and know our thoughts. See if there is some place of wickedness that is there still. And Lord, continue to lead us in Your path of righteousness. Continue, Lord, to conform us into the image of God through the power of Your Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.