

The Spirit within You

Romans 8:8-14

Jesus' ascension (Acts 1:6-9; Luke 24:50-51; John 14:2-4; Acts 3:19-21; Ephesians 1:18-21; 1 Timothy 3:16; John 16:7)

Last week we considered the powerful meaning of the resurrection of the Messiah. This week we begin our midrash by considering the events that took place 40 days after that amazing event. Reading from the *Life of the Master's* section 272...

Jesus came and led them to Bethany. He told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone. Make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

When the Lord Jesus had finished talking with them, he lifted up his hands to heaven and he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven and sat down in the place of honor at God's right hand.

Jesus promised that though He left us, it was not forever and it was not without purpose.

- **John 14:2-4 HCSB** In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if not, I would have told you. I am going away to prepare a place for you. (3) If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come back and receive you to Myself, so that where I am you may be also. (4) You know the way where I am going."

Jesus is in heaven right now preparing a place for each person who submits to His Kingship and thereby is freed from the shackles of sin. Someday, He is going to return from heaven and take us there and we can be confident of making it to heaven because our Good Shepherd has already been there and knows the way.

- **Acts 3:19-21 HCSB** Therefore repent and turn back, that your sins may be wiped out so that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, (20) and He may send Jesus, who has been appointed Messiah for you. (21) Heaven must welcome Him until the times of the restoration of all things, which God spoke about by the mouth of His holy prophets from the beginning.

Peter felt that this powerful truth, that Jesus died, resurrected, ascended to heaven, and will one day return, was sufficient grounds to drive us to our knees. He called out to the crowd before him, "Repent and turn back so that your sins may be wiped out!" Repentance is a change of mind and will, arising from sorrow for sin.

The English word "repent" stands in for the Hebrew word "*nach'am*" which is very close in meaning to "contrition." It is to feel the weight of one's sin and feel deep regret for what one has done. The English "turn back" stands in for the Hebrew word "*shuv*" which is "to change one's ways." Turning back is the outward expression of the inward mindset. It is the work that should accompany faith according to our brother James.

Consider,

- **Ephesians 1:18-21 HCSB** I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the glorious riches of His inheritance among the saints, (19) and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power to us who believe, according to the working of His vast strength. (20) He demonstrated *this power* in the Messiah by raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His right hand in the heavens-- (21) far above every ruler and authority, power and dominion, and every title given, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

Jesus' ascension was a critical part of His receiving the full authority from His father. It is an essential step in the establishment of His kingship.

It is also a magnificent part of the Good News that is a great source of hope.

- **1 Timothy 3:16 HCSB** And most certainly, the mystery of godliness is great: He was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

Far more critical however (at least to my sermon!) is the promise that Jesus made concerning His ascension.

- **John 16:7 HCSB** Nevertheless, I am telling you the truth. It is for your benefit that I go away, because if I don't go away the Counselor will not come to you. If I go, I will send Him to you.

Jesus' ascension was the trigger for the arrival of the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit!

Before we go **there**, I want to share with you another important point about Jesus' ascension and why it is so important to our daily walk in the Way of Faith.

Jesus' work of intercession (Luke 22:31-32; John 17:9-11, 15-17, 20-21; Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 1 John 2:1-2; Romans 6:1-2)

Even while He was on earth, Jesus gave a hint as to His ministry. When Peter was messing up, the Lord said,

- **Luke 22:31-32 HCSB** "Simon, Simon, look out! Satan has asked to sift you like wheat. (32) But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And you, when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

Notice that the Lord said, "I have prayed that your faith may not fail."

At one point, Jesus said a public prayer for His disciples. Let's take a moment to look at a few key parts of that prayer. I'd like you to turn to John 17:11-21. I'm not going to read the entire passage, but I'd like you to have your eyes on it while I point out some relevant parts (which is called parsing, by the way).

So keeping in mind verse 9's statement that He was only praying for those who believe, let's parse John 17:11-21, shall we?

1. He prays that we will be protected while in the world. (vv.11, 16)
2. He prays that we will experience complete joy. (v.13)
3. He prays that we will be protected from the evil one (i.e. Satan). (v.15)
4. He prays that we will be sanctified by the truth; by His Word. (v.17, 19)
5. He prays that we will be one as He is one with the Father. (vv. 11, 21)
6. He prays not only for actual converts but for future converts. (v.20-21)

It's important that we understand what Jesus is praying for because it gives us hope. James says the powerful prayers of the righteous have a great impact. Who is more righteous than Jesus? Who is more likely than Jesus to have their prayers answered?

It is also critical that we understand the nature of His prayers because we need to pray for the same things.

What a tremendous hope the gift of the Holy Spirit provides! No wonder Paul said,

- **Romans 8:34 HCSB** Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is the One who died, but even more, has been raised; He also is at the right hand of God and intercedes for us.
- **Hebrews 7:25 HCSB** Therefore He is always able to save those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to intercede for them.

However, these things were not written to merely give us hope. They were written so that we might change! They were written so that we would know that we should not sin; that we should not simply shrug our shoulders when we fail.

- **1 John 2:1-2 HCSB** My little children, I am writing you these things so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father--Jesus Christ the righteous One. (2) He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world.

Our sins **cost** Jesus. Just because He is willing to intercede on our behalf, does not mean that we have a sinner's "carte blanche"!

- **Romans 6:1-2 HCSB** What should we say then? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may multiply? (2) Absolutely not! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

So how do we keep from sinning? What's different now that we are believers? That brings us to the principle point of today's derash.

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Genesis 6:3 cp John 16:7-14; 14:16-17, 26-27; Romans 8:26-27; John 3:5; Acts 15:7-11; Galatians 3:2-3; Titus 3:5-7; 2 Corinthians 3:2-3, 18)

Way back in Genesis, Yahweh informed us that His Son was not the only one interceding and persuading on our behalf.

- **Genesis 6:3 HCSB** And the LORD said, "My Spirit will not remain with mankind forever, because they are corrupt. Their days will be 120 years."

The word the HCSB translates as "remain" is the verb form *yadon*. This is the only place in the Bible that it occurs. Some translations render the word "contend" or "strive." E. A. Speiser argues that the term is cognate with an Akkadian word meaning "protect" or "shield." In this case, the Lord's Spirit will not always protect humankind. The Spirit had a ministry with men, but could be grieved and made to stop. What was the Spirit doing? Jesus answers that excellent question.

- **John 16:7-14 HCSB** Nevertheless, I am telling you the truth. It is for your benefit that I go away, because if I don't go away the Counselor will not come to you. If I go, I will send Him to you. (8) When He comes, He will convict the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment: (9) about sin, because they do not believe in Me; (10) about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will no longer see Me; (11) and about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged. (12) "I still have many things to tell you, but you can't bear them now. (13) When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth. For He will not speak on His own, but He will speak whatever He hears. He will also declare to you what is to come. (14) He will glorify Me, because He will take from what is Mine and declare it to you.

Let's look at what the Holy Spirit does for us. The Spirit:

1. Counsels us.
2. Convicts us of sin; what we should not do.
3. Convicts us about righteousness; what we should do.
4. Convicts us of judgment; what we should think about things; about the Devil and how much credence or fear we should grant him.
5. Guides us into all truth.
6. Passes messages from the Lord on to us.
7. Warns us of future events.
8. Glorifies the Lord in our hearts.
9. Illuminates the Scriptures to us so that we can better understand them.
10. Once we possess the Spirit, the Spirit remains with us forever.

11. Will give us peace in the midst of our storms.

Turn to:

- **Romans 8:26-27 HCSB** In the same way the Spirit also joins to help in our weakness, because we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with unspoken groanings. (27) And He who searches the hearts knows the Spirit's mind-set, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

From this passage we can add to our list:

12. Strengthens us in our weakness.

13. Guides our prayers.

14. Prays for us when we are so beset by the world that we don't even know what to pray!

15. Enables the Father to fully search our hearts and minds.

16. Ensures that only those prayers that are according to the will of God go through.

What a tremendous gift the Lord Jesus left when He ascended! Surely the Spirit is the treasure the proverbial farmer found in his field that was worth more than everything he possessed. Surely the Spirit is the precious pearl the merchant was willing to bankrupt himself to get!¹

Besides the wonderful services the Spirit brings however, there is an even more critical issue!

- **John 3:5 HCSB** Jesus answered, "I assure you: Unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

Unless the Spirit is involved in our conversion, there is no true conversion. It is not about the "sinner's prayer." It is not about "going forward". It is not about "turning over a new leaf." It is about getting up close and personal with the Spirit.

- **Acts 15:8-11 HCSB** And God, who knows the heart, testified to them (*the Gentiles*) by giving the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us. (9) He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. (10) Why, then, are you now testing God by putting on the disciples' necks a yoke that neither our forefathers nor we have been able to bear? (11) On the contrary, we believe we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way they are."

That is how all men, whether Jew or Gentile are saved. The Spirit whispers in our ears, pointing out the shackles our sins have placed upon us and offering us the way out. When we humbly listen, we are saved. When we reject the Spirit's soul-saving message, we reject forgiveness. We have committed the unpardonable sin – that of rejecting pardon.

- **Galatians 3:2-3 HCSB** I only want to learn this from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by hearing with faith? (3) Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now going to be made complete by the flesh?

Having been reborn and delivered through the Spirit, our lives must continue to be empowered and led by the Spirit. Deep in our spirits, where the Spirit resides, there is a new man and he is no longer a fleshy, carnal creature. He is a spiritual creature and fleshly ways have no more bearing on the new man than they do on the Spirit.

- **Titus 3:5-7 HCSB** He saved us--not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to His mercy, through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit. (6) This *Spirit* He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, (7) so that having been justified by His grace, we may become heirs with the hope of eternal life.

¹ Matthew 13:44-46

We are not saved by our good works. We are not saved by our church attendance. We are not saved by our association with godly families. We are mercifully washed, regenerated, and renewed by the Holy Spirit. We are justified by grace – not just at the moment of salvation but daily.

- **2 Corinthians 3:2-3 HCSB** You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, recognized and read by everyone, (3) since it is plain that you are Christ's letter, produced by us, not written with ink but with the Spirit of the living God; not on stone tablets but on tablets that are hearts of flesh.

Through the indwelling Spirit, we become a living testament of Christ. We become another version of the Scriptures. Not to blaspheme, because I recognize the fundamental difference between the two, but in a real sense WE become the Word made flesh! What a marvelous truth. What a promise that Lucifer, with all his promises of becoming gods, could not keep.

- **2 Corinthians 3:18 HCSB** We all, with unveiled faces, are reflecting the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Day by day, if we heed the Spirit's counsel, we are becoming transformed into the likeness of Christ. At the end of a believer's life, they should so resemble Jesus in their spirit, their character, their language, and their mannerisms that the transition into heaven will be barely discernable.

How does the Spirit do this tremendous work? Let's look at...

Living under the Holy Spirit's control (Acts 9:31; 5:11-14; Romans 8:3-14; Acts 13:2-3; 16:6-10; Galatians 5:22-25)

- **Acts 9:31 HCSB** So the church throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace, being built up and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the encouragement of the Holy Spirit, and it increased in numbers.

Do you remember the simultaneously fascinating and terrifying story of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5? Peter asked them why they had lied to the Holy Spirit and they dropped dead. Immediately, on the heels of that awesome event, Dr. Luke records,

- **Acts 5:11, 14 HCSB** Then great fear came on the whole church and on all who heard these things.... (14) Believers were added to the Lord in increasing numbers--crowds of both men and women.

Consider the results of those two deaths and the fear of the Lord that logically ensued. Now consider Dr. Luke's notes on early church history recorded here in this passage. He said that the early church was built up on two things: the fear of the Lord and the encouragement of the Holy Spirit. That's God's growth plan.

One of the principle reasons that Cultural Christianity is losing ground in the world is that it either over-promotes a fear of the Lord or overemphasizes what it deems to be the encouragement of the Holy Spirit but is (to my mind at least) principally emotional hullabaloo. God's plan is balanced. It is wholesome. It takes equal amounts of fear and encouragement to grow a healthy church.

That fear should drive us to live godly, righteous, holy lives. As Paul said,

- **Romans 8:3-9, 12-14 HCSB** What the law could not do since it was limited by the flesh, God did. He condemned sin in the flesh by sending His own Son in flesh like ours under sin's domain, and as a sin offering, (4) in order that the law's requirement would be accomplished in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (5) For those whose lives are according to the flesh think about the things of the flesh, but those whose lives are according to the Spirit, about the things of the

Spirit. (6) For the mind-set of the flesh is death, but the mind-set of the Spirit is life and peace. (7) For the mind-set of the flesh is hostile to God because it does not submit itself to God's law, for it is unable to do so. (8) Those whose lives are in the flesh are unable to please God. (9) You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God lives in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him... (12) So then, brothers, we are not obligated to the flesh to live according to the flesh, (13) for if you live according to the flesh, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. (14) All those led by God's Spirit are God's sons.

If we are consistently and unrepentantly living according to the flesh and are not experiencing the discipline of the Lord, then we are not God's children.

Finally, there are times when the Spirit will give us direct, concrete, and specific instructions. The Spirit will tell us who to call as our leaders and missionaries.

- **Acts 13:2-3 HCSB** As they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work that I have called them to." (3) Then, after they had fasted, prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them off.

The Spirit will tell us where to serve and when.

- **Acts 16:6-10 HCSB** They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia and were prevented by the Holy Spirit from speaking the message in the province of Asia. (7) When they came to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. (8) So, bypassing Mysia, they came down to Troas. (9) During the night a vision appeared to Paul: a Macedonian man was standing and pleading with him, "Cross over to Macedonia and help us!" (10) After he had seen the vision, we immediately made efforts to set out for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to evangelize them.

Ultimately, the greatest gift of the Spirit is the character that comes part and parcel with that sacred Presence.

- **Galatians 5:22-25 HCSB** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, (23) gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law. (24) Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (25) If we live by the Spirit, we must also follow the Spirit.

May each of you know the joy of receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit; the sealing that will guard your souls until the day of ultimate redemption, and the peace that comes from living holy lives empowered by the Spirit. Amen.