

The Holy Spirit is Sovereign

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Preacher: Jason Webb

- [0:00] Last week we began a series on the Holy Spirit. Last week we began by answering the question, Is the Holy Spirit an it or a he?
- ! And being equal in power and glory means that he is as much of a person as they are. He's not a force. He's not an attribute of God. He's not an abstract personality. He's the distinct third person of the Trinity. He's a person and he is personal.
- And Christian, we should take the light that we have a relationship with him. You have a relationship with him. Just as much as you have a relationship with God the Father, you have a relationship with God the Son.
- You have a distinct relationship with God the Holy Spirit. And so what we are going to do today is begin looking at the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
- [1:22] Remember, we're looking at this from a practical and experimental view of the Holy Spirit and his work. And so what we're going to be talking about is his ministry to us, what he does, who he is for us.
- And so today we're seeing that the Holy Spirit, we're remembering that he is the one who gives us spiritual life. He's the one that has life and he gives life.
- John 6, 63, The Spirit gives life, the flesh counts for nothing. The Spirit gives life, the flesh counts for nothing.
- I'm going to ask you to turn in your Bibles to John 3, verse 5, and we're going to see that truth again. John 3. Of course, this is Jesus meeting with Nicodemus and giving him great spiritual truth that Nicodemus is blind to.
- He's missed. So John 3, verse 5, I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he's born of water and the Spirit.
- [2:41] Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirits. You should not be surprised at my saying, you must be born again. The wind blows wherever it pleases.
- You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit. So the Spirit is the one who gives you life, Christian.
- He gave you life. You have no spiritual life apart from His birthing work. He breathes spiritual life into your soul.
- Spiritual life. What that's talking about is our life with God. It's the life of God in the soul of man.
- God's own life in the soul of man. That's what it means when the Spirit gives birth to Spirit. Spirit. We partake in the divine nature.
- [3:48] Not that we become God, but we participate in His life as He has borne spiritual life into our souls. And that's where we start this study.
- We started with what we were before. Because before this life came, we were something. So what was our condition?

The condition of our soul before He gave us life. Well, I guess what's the opposite of life? It's death. We were dead.

Our hearts were depraved. Our understandings were darkened. Our wills were crooked. We're perverted. Our affections.

The things we loved and enjoyed and liked. The things that excited us. We're all pointed the wrong way. And so think of what Jesus said about the heart.

[4:53] The heart before the Spirit comes. He said, For out of the heart proceeds evil thoughts. Murder. Adultery. Sexual immorality. Theft. False testimony.

Slander. He says, That's what makes you unclean. And all of that uncleanness that came out of your heart began inside of your heart.

And so that was us. Dead. Filthy. With the stench of death hanging around us. With the worms of sin coming out of our foul hearts.

And some of us might have been nice enough. We might have been kind. We might have been. We might have looked halfway decent.

I think that's the hardest thing. Is to. For us to see past the veneer. And to see what God sees beneath the surface. Beneath the surface. It's a very different story.

[5:52] Because inside of our hearts. No matter what it looked like on the outside. Was a deep. Deep. Ungodliness. Irreversible.

Intractable. Ungod likeness. There was no love of God there. There was no affection for Jesus. There was no.

We didn't want holiness. We didn't want to kill sin. Our understandings were dark. Ephesians 4.18 There was no true knowledge of God.

We might have known about Him. But we had no true knowledge of Him. There was no appreciation. No understanding of God's love. There was no understanding or appreciation of God's Word.

It didn't weigh anything upon our hearts. His laws. His commands. There was no appreciation for judgment. For the holiness of God.

[6:53] There was no appreciation for the right of God to judge our souls. Our minds were dark. No light. So we couldn't see where we were going.

We couldn't see what we were doing. We didn't understand or appreciate any kind of wisdom. We didn't appreciate the goodness of God. The kindness of God.

We didn't appreciate the goodness of God's ways. Or the goodness of His character. Our minds were blind. To the truly important things.

The things that really mattered. And our wills were bent. Perverted. That means twisted to the wrong end.

Crooked. And that's what we mean when we talk about the bondage of the will. We don't mean that the will just can't choose anything.

[7:58] We mean that it was enslaved to sin. It was that we would only choose evil. We would only choose what is in our selfishness.

We would choose self. And we need to be clear that sometimes, yes, our way and God's way would agree. Would run parallel with each other. But we never submitted to Him.

Sometimes God's ways and our ways happened to sort of run on the same path. Along the same highway for a little bit. But that was only happenstance. That was just only accidental.

Let His way cross my way. And that's where we prove what was in our hearts. Let His way cross mine.

And I would have none of His way. More than that, our hearts were enmity with God. Romans 8-7 talks about it. It's not only that we were hostile to God and His law.

[9:01] But our flesh is the hostility itself. That we disagree with God in principle. So Romans 8-7, the mind of sinful man is death.

It's set on death. It produces death. Death is all that it has. It doesn't have life. Because it doesn't have God. And so, whatever it is, it just has mere existence. The mind of sinful man is death.

But the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace. The sinful man is hostility to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

So where does that hostility to God play itself out? Where's the ground? Where's the battlefield? Where's the place of contention? The place of conflict?

What did that say? It's with the law of God. It does not submit. It cannot submit to God's law.

[10:04] The enmity, the hostility of our old heart was against God as the moral governor, as the king, as the one that has the right that can and should tell us what to do and to give us rules.

And to expect those rules to be followed. And we hated him. And that's what this is talking about. Hostility is this abiding hatred. We hated him as lawgiver. And that's the important thing to see.

We hated him as the real king. The one that says, when our ways cross, that you should go my way. God could be anything he wanted as long as he didn't tell us to do something that we didn't want to do.

Or as long as he didn't tell us to do something we wanted to do. Listen to Octavius Winslow. The question is, who shall reign?

Who's going to be the king? God or sinner? This is the only ground of controversy. Decide this question in favor of the sinner.

[11:20] And as far as it relates to him, the controversy ceases. Only let God drop the reins of his government. Let him descend from his throne.

Lay aside his scepter. Give up his law. And the enmity of the carnal mind ceases. That's why people who can live all sorts of lives, the life that they want, and they can still say, I want, I love God.

It's because in their own mind, God has no right to tell them what to do. He's their savior. He's their friend. He's their whatever he is. But he's not their king.

So they get along just fine with the so-called God. So let God quit being God and man would be happy. And that was my heart. Now, can you, I just, think about how wicked that is.

We, the God that is there, the God that is real, is the very God that our heart said, I wish he wasn't, I wish he didn't even exist.

[12:38] So enmity, enmity to God. Think about how awful that is. So, our hearts hated the one who 1 John says is love.

Whose very name and nature is love. We hated the one who is holy. Who is good. We hated him. And we hated the one who loves sinners.

We hated the one that loved us and sent his son that if we would believe would have everlasting life. We hated his son. The son who came into this world and for a world of lost sinners was slain.

We hated him. And that's the deadness. That's the condition of our souls before the spirit came and found us. Dead in our transgressions and sins.

Dead in the uncircumcision, the uncleanness, the apart from God, the defiledness of our hearts. So dead to God, dead to spiritual things.

[13:45] Now, how can you tell when something is dead? How can you tell if something is dead? Well, I remember when my daughter, one of my daughter's hamsters died.

You know how I could tell it was dead? I'm not like a hamster doctor. But you poke it and it doesn't move. You warm it up because sometimes hamsters, if it gets too cold, they'll like almost go into a, what do you call that, hibernation state.

And if you warm them up, they'll start moving again. So you poke him, he doesn't move. Stick him right by the lamp, he doesn't move. How do you know if something is dead?

Well, no matter what you do to it, it doesn't move. No feeling. So I want you to think about how many times you heard the gospel.

How many times, think about what the preachers, what do preachers do? Preachers preach the law. It's authority.

[14:55] It's truth. It's purity. It's demands. We preach the law. We preach its curse. Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do what is written in this law.

We preach a holy God. A sin seeing. A sin hating. A sin judging God. A sin avenging God.

We preach hell. A fire prepared for the angels. The fallen angels. But how dead are men? They hear it.

And nothing. Nothing but coldness. Death. Motionless. Or we preach the gospel. We preach the glory of grace.

We preach amazing grace. We preach free grace and full grace. It's promises. It's mercy. We proclaim Him. We preach Jesus who, though He was rich, for our sakes He became poor.

[16:00] And we talk about heaven as best as we are able. And to all that, the dead don't move. That was us.

Something that lives, breathes. Not only moves, it breathes. Prayer is the breath of the soul. Remember, Saul of Tarsus was only breathing out threats.

He had breath. It was threats to God. Threats to Christ and His people. And then, there was no spiritual breath there. But when God saved him, Jesus says to Ananias, go, he's praying.

He's breathing now. He has real breath in his lungs. And that was our souls. Prayerless, lifeless, breathless, dead, unresponsive, hating God.

And, sorry we have to spend so long on that. But the only way we can see the magnitude and the grace and the glory of what the Holy Spirit does is to begin with what He had to work with.

[17:12] Where He came, what He did for us. And so, what did He do? He gives life. So, think of the glory of the Holy Spirit. That He can take souls and hearts like ours.

And that's where He brings life. The glory of the Holy Spirit that He makes these dead, lifeless, dull, hateful, careless hearts to love God.

He takes us from abiding enmity to finally abiding love. And so, what does He do? He makes us pass from death to life. From the land of the dead.

That's what we were just talking about. To the land of the living. And so, now, what does the living person do? He's breathing. He's sensible.

The Gospel now comes and it's not, I don't care. No, this is great. This is wonderful. And you preach the law to that person and He says, that's the law I love.

- [18:18] That's the law I want to obey. That's the law I want to obey. So, He makes this new creation. 2 Corinthians 5.17. If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.
- The old is gone. The new has come. It's as vast of a difference as whatever before Genesis 1.1 and Genesis 1.1.
- Old, new. Notice what it is. It's in Christ. That's the Spirit's work. That's how He does it. He unites us to Jesus Christ.
- And in Christ, that old creation passes away and the new one comes. Death flees from the risen one. And when we're joined to the risen one, His life spills over into our lives.
- His spiritual resurrection life comes into us. That's the spiritual life that the Holy Spirit gives us. It's in Christ that we become these new creations. He turns the lights on.
- [19:21] He makes the light shine in our hearts. Nothing but darkness before. No appreciation for wisdom. No appreciation for going the right way. No appreciation for judgment, for eternity, for the character of God, for loving others even.
- At the cost of ourselves. It's dark to so many things. But now He calls us out of darkness and into His marvelous light. And once we were enemies, but the Spirit turns that hatred into love.
- He sheds abroad the love of God into our hearts. And because we now see He loves us, we then love Him. Once we hated God.
- Think about how far He takes us. To hating God. To calling Him Abba, Father. A deep, affectionate relationship with the Father.
- So now He isn't our enemy. We look at Him as this dear, affectionate Father. And that enmity that said, I will not submit to God's law.
- [20:38] Think about how suddenly that changes. How suddenly the Spirit gives life and takes that dead heart out and gives us a new heart. A new love for God's law.
- A new desire for God's law. Ezekiel 36, 26. This is what God promised. I will give you a new heart.
- And I will put a new spirit in you. I will remove from you your heart of stone. And give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit in you.
- And move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. Do you see what the Spirit does? Do you see His strength?
- His grace. The one thing we would not do. Submit to God's law. Is now the thing that the Spirit moves us to obey.
- [21:38] And so once we had no love for anyone. Except for ourselves, basically. At least that was our greatest commitment. And now He's so changed it.
- So our deepest commitment is to God. So how much do we owe to the Holy Spirit? Every movement.
- Every new desire. Every bit of hatred for sin comes from Him. It comes from Him. Raising us from the dead. It comes from Him. Giving us the life of Christ into our own hearts.
- And so these new feelings. These new hopes. These new loves. The new desires. They're all from Him. And the Holy Spirit did that for you. And now I want you to look at how He does that.
- How He did it. Well, He does it sovereignly. Sovereignly. He does it as the Lord. He does it without any outside constraint.
- [22:42] He does it without any outside help. He does it with complete freedom. And with complete authority. So let me ask you.

You have John 3 there turned up. Where do you see in John 3. This idea of sovereignty. The sovereignty of the Holy Spirit.

Where in the passage that I read. The wind blows. Where it wishes. Where it pleases. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.

That's the Spirit's sovereignty. His Lordship. His authority and salvation. And so no one can command the wind. No one can control the wind.

We can't summon it. We can't still it. It comes and goes. When and where. It pleases. Now does that mean that the Spirit is not resisted?

[23:52] I'm not saying that. The Spirit is resisted. The soul of men resists him with everything that they have. But.

Listen to what Mr. Winslow says. Speaking about this resistance and then the Spirit. He is resisted. He is resisted strongly and perseveringly.

But he is not overpowered. He is not overpowered. All the enmity. And carnality. Of the heart. Rises in direct opposition to him.

But listen to what happens. But when bent upon a mission of love. When in accordance with the eternal purpose. He comes to save.

Not all the powers on earth. Or in hell. Can effectually resist him. Like the mighty element. Like the wind. He bears down all opposition.

[24:55] Sweeps away every barrier. Overcomes every difficulty. Overcomes every difficulty. And the sinner. Made willing. In the day of his power. Is brought to the feet of Jesus.

There meekly. And gratefully to sit. Clothed. And in his right mind. His power. Who can withstand. Whether he speaks in the still small voice.

Of tender persuasive love. Or whether he comes. In the mighty rushing wind. Of deep. And overwhelming conviction. His influence is unquenchable.

His power. Is irresistible. That's why we worship him. That's why we worship him. He is our God.

And when he comes in to save. No one. Can tell him no. Every barrier. Every bit of resistance. He. Sweeps it all away.

[26:01] He saves us no matter how much of a defense we put up. And when he comes on a mission of love. He comes with irresistible grace.

So praise his name. Praise his name. So he's not only sovereign. In that he does.

In that no one else. No one can hold his hand back. But he comes to whom he will. And he comes when he will. So think about the who of that.

He is the Lord. And he does what he wants. With whom he wants. He is not tame. He blows where he pleases. So think of.

Of that. The spirit gives birth to who he pleases. Maybe there's a very striking illustration of that in your life. And what I mean by that.

[27:04] Is this. That maybe. In your circle of friends. Family. You alone. Have new life. I don't know.

Maybe this is you. So we can ask like the others. Those friends and those family. Where are they. They're still dead in their sins.

Where are they. They're living in the world. Living for the world. Loving sin. Loving self. Careless.

Careless. No different at all. Than what you used to be. Rejecting God. Rejecting Christ. Warring against the spirit.

So where are they. Maybe they're running through every barrier. That God is putting in their path. Maybe from the outside you could see.

[28:09] Can't they see what God is trying to do. They're like cars going 90 miles an hour. Straight to hell. They're running over every concrete barrier. That God is putting in their way.

And so where are they. They're on that road. Or maybe where are they. Maybe they're already in hell.

What about you. Well. You are as much like that demon possessed man. As they are. But now here you are. Sitting at Christ's feet.

Clothed. And in your right mind. And the question is. Why? The spirit. The spirit gave you new life.

But again. Why? And the answer is that the spirit is sovereign. In his grace. He comes to who he wants. To whom he wants.

[29:10] He's sovereign there. Dead. That's where we were. Dead as anyone else. Dead set against God. Dead unresponsive to God. Dead in our transgressions.

Stone cold death to his word. Stone cold blind to the things that really mattered. Breathless. That was us. But the spirit came. He came to us.

And he entered those tombs. That are our hearts. And he dug out that old dead heart. And he put in a new heart. And it was nothing but darkness in that tomb.

And he. Made the light shine. That's the spirit. And how full of love he is. How full of love and grace he is for you.

And he would do that for you. Now. So we've seen. He does it sovereignly. He does it graciously. And now. The last thing. We want to see is this.

[30:10] The life he. He began in us. He continues in us. The soul that he. He gives birth to. He. Watches over and nourishes that life.

And that soul. Forever. He sustains life in that soul. He keeps it. He nourishes it. He watches over it. He waters it.

He feeds it. He cares for it. The most careful. Gardener in the whole world. The most attentive. Gardener in the whole world. Is not more attentive.

And not more careful. And not more loving. Than the Holy Spirit is. With the garden of your soul. There's not a mother. That cares for her baby.

That the Holy Spirit. Doesn't care more. For the soul that he has given birth to. That he has brought back from the dead. So how.

[31:08] How wonderful. This ministry of the Holy Spirit is. How graciously. And tenderly. How consistently. And constantly. He watches over us.

You know. There's nothing in our spiritual life. That isn't prone. To decay. To withering. You've seen that in your own life. Haven't you?

There's ups and downs. There's ebbs and flows. But. Why is there recovery? Why is there restoration? Why is there revival? Why is there spring after winter?

It's because. The Holy Spirit. Loves us. And he continues to feed us. And nourish us. And brings us back. He restores our soul. And so.

Our love grows cold. Our hearts grow cold. But the light doesn't go out. Because the Holy Spirit. Is tending the flame. And our souls can go through dark winters.

[32:11] But you know what? There's one. Who watches over our soul. In the darkest winters. In the coldest nights. And he keeps those fires.

Burning. Listen again to. Winslow. This is the work of. The ever watchful.

Ever loving. Ever faithful spirit. He watches over. With a sleepless. Loving eye. The work he has wrought.

In the soul. Not a moment. But he has his eye upon it. By day. And by night. And summer. And in winter. When it decays.

And when it revives. He is there. It's guardian. It's protector. It's author. It's finisher. It's finisher. And he gives us life.

[33:08] He sustains that life. So how does he sustain that life? How does he nourish that life? How is it that we are revived?

How is it that we're built up? How is it? Why is it that? How does he do this? Well. Well. It's. It's. What he did the first time.

He just continues to do. How did he give us that new life to begin with? He brought us to Jesus Christ. The resurrected one. Who said. I am.

The way. I am the truth. I am the life. He brings us to. Jesus. Who has the fullness of life. And. The way he began that work.

Is the way he nourishes us. All the way to the end. He. He. Nourishes us. He gives us life. Out of the fullness that is in Jesus.

[34:09] He brought. Resurrection life. Into our souls. And. He continues. That life there. So the.

The spirit. Takes Christ's strength. And gives it to us. The spirit. Takes. Christ's love. And. Pours it into our souls.

The spirit. Takes. Christ's wisdom. And gives it to us. The spirit. Takes. His purity. For our impurity.

His wisdom. For our folly. His strength. For our weakness. That's what he does. The holy. Jesus is this. Vast. Pantry. This vast. Treasury.

Of grace. And it's all. It's all ours. In him. And the holy spirit. Takes all of that grace. And that wisdom. And that love. And that knowledge.

[35:02] And he. Gives it to us. That life. And so. He feeds us. And our food is Christ.

He gives us. Something to drink. And our. Our water. Is Jesus. So. The spirit. Graciously. Sovereignly.

Gave us life. And then he. Graciously. Sovereignly. Nourishes. Our life. And what he has begun. He will continue. To do. Because what kind of life.

Did he give us. He gave us eternal life. Eternal life. That's never ending. That's never dying. That's never failing.

Never corrupting. Away. Rotting away. Life. He gave you that life. And so that's what he's done for us. So.

[36:00] Practically. Experimentally. What do we do? Well. We worship him. We say thank you. We trust him. We trust him. We trust him. And then we trust him. We trust him.

We need him. So let's trust him. To give us that life that we need. Well. Let's pray. And then we'll be dismissed.

Heavenly Father. We do thank you. Thank you for your help. That you've given us. I pray that you would bless our. Morning together.

Thank you. Holy Spirit. For giving us life. For sustaining that life. Thank you that you do so much more. But. Without this work.

Nothing would. Nothing else would have mattered. But you. You gave us this life. You. You brought us into fellowship with. With Jesus Christ. And with God the Father. And.

[37:02] When. We began to know. God. Oh. We began to live. The light began to shine. So we thank you for.

Bringing us into life. Bringing us into fellowship. And. In. In. With God. Pray that you would sustain that life then. And help us.

Lord Jesus. We thank you that you are so full. Of riches. And. Treader for us. Teach us to live upon you. Teach us to rely.

Upon. What you have for us. And Father. We thank you that you plan this all. And that you love us. And keep a watchful eye. On us. As our Father. Father. We love you.

We thank you for making us your children. Help us to live in the joy of that today. Pray that you would bless us in all that we do. And help us to praise you the rest of the day together. In our Lord's name I pray.

[37:57] Amen. God. We're dismissed. We're dismissed. We're dismissed. We're dismissed.