

Doctrine of the Trinity, Part 9

To be obedient to God, to have victory over sin in your life, and to participate actively in God's plan for your life and accomplish what He has for you to do, you must be Spirit-enabled, and your way of thinking, that is, how you respond to problems, must be in alignment with God.

Renovated Thinking

I once took a weeklong pistol training course in Houston, taught by the famous pistolero Colonel Jeff Cooper. One thing he told the class has direct application here. He said, and I am paraphrasing, "Under stress, you will tend to revert to what you first learned." He explained that our first-learned, often incorrect gun-handling habits were a powerful force that we would revert to in a stressful situation, even if we had learned newer and superior techniques. Those newer, superior techniques could override the first-learned habits only after much training and practice to recondition the brain to react using them instead.

Applied to our subject: Before we came to Christ, "what we first learned" about responding to problems and temptations in our lives was fleshly. Our responses were determined by one of two things: our conscience, with its set of learned norms and standards, or our sin nature. Often the latter won that contest. As believers, we are called to respond to temptation with divine solutions. But we spent years being conditioned one way, and you cannot expect to change that behavior pattern overnight. As Cooper warned, "Under stress, you will tend to revert to what you first learned." That needs to be changed, and the Scriptures tell us exactly that.

Romans 12:2 Do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed by the renewal of your mind**, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Emphasis added)

The word translated "renewing" here is *anakainosis*, meaning renew or renovate, a complete change for the better. We must renovate what is old, damaged, and in need of renovation. That is a learning process. Just because you are saved doesn't mean you immediately conquer your sin nature or become a *productive* child of God overnight. You have the

resource: the Holy Spirit, but you have not yet renovated your thinking. That calls for training.

It takes training and practice to break that old pattern. The difference after salvation is that we have the Holy Spirit. With learned doctrines for application to life and training by the Holy Spirit through faith-building exercises, our thinking is “renovated.” By “faith-building exercises,” I mean what Paul calls “testing” in the passage above. You will be tested on what you learn. Fail the test, and you repeat the exercise. Pass the test, and you advance spiritually to more challenging tests.

After a period of time, when our thinking is “renovated,” we will come to rely on learned doctrine, divine provisions, and the Holy Spirit to solve problems, rather than reverting to our old, first-learned, fleshly responses. In the beginning, the believer will fail more than succeed. As the believer learns doctrine and his faith is tested by God, he builds faith muscle and comes to rely less on first-learned responses and more on learned doctrine, the Spirit, and faith. We call that spiritual maturity.

Okay, what is the source of this learned doctrine we are to use in application to life? Guess!

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

“Breathed out by God” (ESV), elsewhere translated as “given by inspiration of God,” comes from the Greek *theopneustos*, which should be translated as “God-breathed.” The Scriptures originate with God and His very breath. What is contained in Scripture is “profitable” (Greek *ophelimos*), meaning helpful, serviceable, and advantageous. The Bible was left here for our benefit and profit! We will be reproofed, convicted, corrected, and instructed in what is righteous behavior.

“Reproofed” is *elegchos*, which refers to the fact that the Scriptures will point out our sins and failures in a very visible way. This is sometimes called “conviction,” similar to being convicted in a court of law.

“Corrected” is *epanorthosis*, which conveys the idea of straightening up or correction.

Lastly, we are instructed in righteousness. “Instructed” is *paideia*, from which we get pedagogue, teacher, instructor, or tutelage. In ancient times, the pedagogue was an educated and trusted slave responsible for teaching the children of the household manners and religion. The pedagogue taught the children until they reached maturity, at which point they were expected to become responsible adults.

Scripture can make the believer responsible and mature. The next verse says, “that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:17). “Complete” is the Greek word *artios*, meaning complete or perfect, and refers to spiritual maturity. One way to understand the word is that it denotes a special aptitude for a particular use.

2 Peter 1:21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Peter tells us that the source of Scripture is the Holy Spirit, “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as *they were* moved by the Holy Ghost.” In this passage, “prophecy” refers to any utterance inspired by God. The Scriptures are authored by the Holy Spirit and, through the inspiration of the original authors, are imparted to man without altering their grammar, style, or syntax. When taken in its entirety and correctly interpreted, there is not a single conflict in all the Scriptures.

Lastly, 1 Corinthians 2:6-16 sums it all up for us. It tells us that the Holy Spirit makes all this clear to us, “God has revealed to us through the Spirit” (verse 10). We have received the Spirit of God “that we might understand the things freely given us by God” (verse 12).

“The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned” (verse 14).

The “natural” man in this verse is *psuchikos*, which refers to the lower, bestial nature of man. This is a picture of the unbeliever who lacks access

to the Holy Spirit. Such a man cannot discern these spiritual matters without the Spirit. They are “foolishness to him” because they must be discerned through the Spirit (verse 14).

One of the most important ministries of the Holy Spirit is that He instructs us and makes Scripture clear.

Sanctification

The word “sanctify” means to set apart, to make one distinct from others. In the context of sanctification unto God, it means to set one apart as God’s own. This implies evidence of sanctification. The one sanctified will look and behave differently from those who are not sanctified.

Believers are sanctified in three ways. First, at the very moment a believer receives Christ as his personal Savior, the new believer receives a human spirit generated by the Holy Spirit and is sanctified, set apart, as an eternal possession of God because of the believer’s permanent identity with Christ. This idea is often expressed in Scripture by the term “in Christ.” We call this “positional sanctification.”

The third is called “ultimate sanctification,” which occurs at the moment the believer, whether dead or alive, receives his resurrection body at the rapture. This finally and completely sets the believer apart, sanctifying him from all unbelievers as he enters the presence of Jesus forever as the “bride of Christ.”

The second is called “experiential sanctification” and refers to the process we described as the *renewing* of our minds. This sanctification carries a very high cost. It means setting aside our earthly concerns and becoming intensely focused on God’s point of view. It also means dedicating the full strength of our body, soul, and spirit to God’s purpose alone.

Jesus prayed that we would be one with Him, just as He was one with the Father (John 17:21-23). Experiential sanctification means being made one with Jesus so that the nature that controlled Him will also control us.

Galatians 1:15-16 says, “When it pleased God...to reveal His Son in me....” This process of experiential sanctification is the formation and revelation of Christ’s very nature in the believer. We are led, energized, and sustained by the Spirit “...until Christ is formed in you” (Galatians 4:19).

But you must determine the limits of your ability and then step beyond them in faith in God's promises so that the very nature of Christ can be revealed in us through the Spirit.

Positional sanctification and ultimate sanctification are **one-time acts** of God. Experiential sanctification is **a process** that leads the believer to spiritual maturity.

Our war is not against sin. Sin was conquered at the Cross. The conflict is between our new Christ nature, being formed in us, and our old sin nature. Victory comes only through a series of moral choices, and the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit enables us to make the right ones. Through this process, God will bring many sons to glory (Hebrews 2:10).

Philippians 4:11 For I have learned, in whatever situation I am, to be content. ¹² I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. ¹³ I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

The Holy Spirit in Creation

We have already seen how the Holy Spirit participated in creation in Genesis 1:2, but the Holy Spirit's one great act was bringing the humanity of Jesus Christ into being. It is often mistakenly believed that Mary contributed His humanity and the Spirit His deity. The deity of Christ was His own from all eternity and thus did not originate at His conception or birth.

Luke 1:35 And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.

Mary contributed no more than what was assigned to the woman in childbearing; she nurtured and developed the life committed to her, but it was the Spirit who caused the humanity of Christ to originate in her womb and who guided her in her call from God.

The Holy Spirit as a Witness

Romans 8:16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

In this work, the Spirit makes us aware of the reality of our new selves, namely that we are a new creature in Christ. This is sometimes called “assurance.” Those who believe in Christ become, in their own right, “children of God.”

John 1:12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

The Spirit Himself bears witness that this great reality has been accomplished.

1 John 5:10 He that believeth on the Son of God has the witness in himself.

The Spirit’s witness can be hindered when the believer is not in the right spiritual relationship with God (in carnality outside his AO). The Spirit’s richest witness to the believer’s sonship may not be fully experienced by all who are saved because they are not under the filling of the Spirit due to unconfessed sin in their lives.

The Spirit Intercedes for Us in Heaven

Romans 8:26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷ And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

The Holy Spirit, who indwells us, knows our wants and needs better than we do and pleads with us in our prayers. Calvin states that the Spirit suggests to us the proper words for acceptable prayer, which we would otherwise be unable to utter. The Spirit is our intercessor, even without our asking. What a marvelous privilege it is to have the very Spirit of God on our side, working on our behalf.

Spiritual Gifts

There are two other things the Spirit does for us that we should consider. They are spiritual gifts and the fruit of the Spirit. We have seen both in previous lessons, so I will provide only a brief review here.

Spiritual gifts are given to every believer at the moment of salvation. These are among the spiritual assets given to us to do God's work. God has a plan and a purpose for your life as a believer. Divine **works are an expected result** of the saved believer.

I did not say that works are necessary for salvation, nor did I say that failing to produce works after salvation will result in the loss of salvation.

You cannot earn your salvation by works (Galatians 2:16; 3:11; Romans 3:20). Salvation comes through faith in Christ and by no other means (Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 3:24, 28; 4:5; 5:1; John 20:31; Philippians 3:24). You cannot lose your salvation once you have it (John 10:20, 29; Jude 1:24; 2 Timothy 4:18).

What I said was that there is an **expectation** that the saved Christian will produce for God.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works**, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Emphasis added)

Sadly, many believers are so deceived by Satan that they never produce anything of value, or worse, what they produce is for personal glorification. I will say it again, "God has a job for you to do!" And He will provide all you need to carry out what He expects.

Part of that job involves your spiritual gift(s). You were given a special ability or talent at the time of your salvation for God to use. These are mentioned in various places in the Bible.

1 Corinthians 12:7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸ For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of

healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

1 Corinthians 12:28 And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. ²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰ Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹ But earnestly desire the higher gifts.

(Also Romans 12:5-6; and Ephesians 4:11-12.)

These gifts are sovereignly bestowed by God according to His needs, not your wants. They are for His purposes, not for your pleasure. However, when in right relationship with God, you will find far more pleasure in this spiritual vocation than anywhere else in life.

Furthermore, a believer can receive more than one spiritual gift. These gifts may operate simultaneously or at different times in a person's life. For example, you might have the gift of helps early in your spiritual life and the gift of pastor/teacher later on after you have been prepared for it. And just because you have a career in whatever field does not mean you will not be called to leave it and do something entirely different for Christ. Don't be surprised if you are called to the ministry or to do missionary work in a foreign country. Anything can happen here, and it is best to "go with the flow," as they say. I never dreamed I would be teaching a Bible class. I enjoy it immensely! And I have learned (the hard way) to keep my priorities straight and not let anything else in my life get in the way of this spiritual gift.

These spiritual gifts do not necessarily build on natural talent, though they can. When you discover your spiritual gift, you may be surprised and at least momentarily doubtful. God will not give any gifts beyond a believer's ability. It may seem that way, but if God gave it, you can do it. However, it may take training, hard work, and study to bring these gifts to their full potential.

Your spiritual gift is one thing you will be called to give an account for at the judgment seat of Christ, also known as the Bema Judgment. Every believer will have to give an account of himself. This judgment is not about sin. That was judged at the Cross, and Jesus took our place for that. At the Bema, we will have to explain to Jesus Christ, our judge, what we did with the spiritual assets, including our spiritual gift(s), that God left for us to use in His plan for our life. Even though the believer is in heaven, his salvation is assured and he is experiencing great happiness in the presence of the Lord, this could be a moment of extreme discomfort if he has not made good use of the spiritual gift God prepared for him. Remember how bad you felt when you let your dad or mom down? Imagine how you will feel if you have let your Savior down.

Fruit of the Spirit

There are other spiritual gifts in a broader sense. I am referring to the Fruit of the Spirit, as alluded to in Hebrews 12:11 and detailed in Galatians 5:22-23. We covered this subject in depth in the Galatians series.

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

These nine graces that comprise the fruit of the Spirit are not produced by any human. This verse clearly states that they are produced by the Holy Spirit. No matter how hard you try, you will never, on your own, muster up love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. But you can experience them being produced in you and flowing out through you by the Holy Spirit. What is the fruit of the Spirit?

First, note the singular verb "is" in English. It is singular in Greek as well, indicating that these nine graces form a unit—nine parts of a whole. If you experience one, you experience them all.

The first three, love, joy, and peace, are the character of Christ expressed as an inward state. This is Christ's own love, His own joy, His own peace. The believer experiences the same love, joy, and peace that Jesus did. This is not human love, joy, and peace. It is divine love, joy, and peace, the best kind!

The second three, longsuffering, gentleness, and goodness, are the character of Christ as expressed toward man. This is Christ's own patience, His own gentleness, and His own goodness. The believer is expressing Christ's own patience, gentleness, and goodness toward his fellow man.

The last three, faith, meekness, and temperance, are the character of Christ as expressed toward God. This is Christ's own faith, humility, and self-control. The believer is expressing Christ's own faith, humility, and self-control toward the Creator.

The fruit of the Spirit is nothing less than the very lifestyle Jesus Christ lived during His 33 years on earth. It is Christ's perfect lifestyle, God-glorifying and fulfilling the Law as promised. That is what Galatians 5:23 says, "against such there is no law." If you live this Spirit-enabled, Spirit-produced lifestyle, the very same lifestyle Christ lived, you fulfill every aspect of the Law - not only the letter but its intent! You do that by "walking in the Spirit."

Galatians 5:16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

During His 33 years, Jesus Christ lived not by His own deity but as a man, depending on the Holy Spirit's sustaining and guiding power. Jesus Christ test-drove the Spiritual Life for us, proved it worked under the most severe conditions, and left it for us when He sent the Paraclete (Comforter) to enable us to do exactly as He did.

Jesus said He came "to give them life that they may have it more abundantly." Some teach that this refers to eternal life. That may be true, but He was also referring to our Spirit-enabled ability to experience the Christ-life as the fruit of the Spirit.

Correction and Chastisement

For the believer who has confessed his sins and yielded his will to God's will, he is in "right relationship" with God and filled with the Spirit. This is distinct from the Spirit's indwelling. All believers are indwelt, but only those in fellowship are filled with the Spirit. Indwelling means God the Holy Spirit is in residence; filling means He is active in your life. While on this earth, the believer never loses the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, but he can lose

the filling. The filling of the Spirit is the believer's empowerment directly from God, but that empowerment can be lost through a sinful act on the part of the believer. The filling of the Spirit (divine empowerment) is lost. This is called "grieving the Spirit" in Ephesians 4:30 and "quenching the Spirit" in 1 Thessalonians 5:19. Quenching the Spirit is the more intensive result of prolonged, willful, and unrepentant sinning in a believer's life. The Spirit's ministry to the sinning believer is limited to chastisement to teach him a lesson and encourage him back into the will of God. In the case of quenching the Spirit and prolonged willful disobedience, the believer can even face death (1 John 5:16) but not loss of salvation!

Hebrews 12:5 And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. ⁶ For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.” ⁷ It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? ⁸ If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹ Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰ For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. ¹¹ For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

The word "discipline" is *paideia* (v. 11) and carries not only the meaning of punishment and reproof but also the idea of training and instruction. The word “chastises” (v. 6) means to scourge and refers to inflicting pain to correct persistent disobedience. This passage describes the Holy Spirit’s correcting ministry. The disobedient believer can expect the Holy Spirit to act in ways that point out their failure(s) and urge them back into their AO. These actions may be painful, depending on the extent of the disobedience, but the purpose is correction. The sinning believer is expected to learn from the experience, correct their disobedience, and be restored to a condition we call “filled with the Spirit” and once again productive for God. Verse 11 expresses this idea, stating that the discipline "later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."

The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

We have seen many references to the Holy Spirit in New Testament Scripture throughout this study. It has been argued that the concept of the Triunity of God, specifically the Holy Spirit, is foreign to Old Testament thought. Nothing could be further from the truth. The very word for God used in the Old Testament, *elohim*, is plural. In Genesis 1:26, “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness....” It has been argued that this is merely the use of the plural of royalty. That is not the case in Scripture.

As we have seen, we need look no further than the second verse of the Old Testament, Genesis 1:2, which refers to the “Spirit of God.” We examined this passage in some detail in Part 7.

Some other examples of the Holy Spirit in the OT:

- In Genesis 41:38, even Pharaoh recognized the Holy Spirit.
- In Judges 6:31, the Spirit of God came upon Gideon.
- In Judges 11:29, the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah.
- In 1 Samuel 19:20, the Spirit of the LORD came upon Saul’s messengers, and they prophesied.
- In 2 Samuel 23:2, the Spirit of the LORD spoke to Samuel about David.
- In Isaiah 48:16, the prophet mentions God and His Spirit.
- In Job 33:4, Job said the Spirit of God made him and gave him life.
- In Isaiah 61:1, Isaiah said the Spirit of the LORD was upon him and anointed him to “preach good tidings to the meek, sent him to the broken-hearted, proclaim liberty to the captives.”
- In Ezekiel 11:5, Ezekiel said the Spirit of the LORD “fell upon” him and told him to speak to the House of Israel and warn them of impending judgment.
- In Micah 3:8, Micah said he was “full of power by the spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin.”
- In Psalm 51, David prays for forgiveness for his many sins, including his affair with Bathsheba and murdering her husband to cover up the whole miserable affair. As he confesses his sins to God, he says, “take not thy holy spirit from me” (verse 11). The word translated “Spirit” is our friend *ruwach*, but the word translated “Holy” is interesting. It is *qodesh* and means a sacred place or thing. In the Old

Testament, a thousand years before Christ, David uses the exact name for the Spirit of God that we do during the Church Age.

Things were a little different before Pentecost in AD 30. In many of the examples I cited, we see the Spirit coming upon someone and, in some way, empowering them to do something like prophesy. During the Church Age, believers enjoy the universal indwelling of the Spirit. That was not the case prior to this Church Age when the Spirit “came upon” believers for periods of time and for specific purposes. We call this “endowment.” In Old Testament times, the Spirit and His enabling power were given only to a few, only for relatively short periods, and for specific purposes. We see this in examples like the gift of prophecy or the priests charged with producing the sacred elements for the Tabernacle. We also see it in the case of kings, as in David.

Believers today enjoy a wonderful asset in the indwelling of the Spirit. Some believers in the Old Testament also enjoyed this asset, but it was neither universal nor permanent.

The Holy Spirit is clearly depicted in the Old Testament in ways that are difficult to deny. I have presented only a few of the many references to the Spirit of the LORD in the Old Testament. There are many more. Even in the Old Testament, God is portrayed as a triune God, one divine essence in three persons.