**Introduction**

Today we celebrate Pentecost which commemorates the coming of the promised Holy Spirit. In ancient Israel the Holy Spirit came “upon” the people. When Jesus walked this earth, the Holy Spirit is described as “with” his disciples. But at that first Pentecost there was a remarkable and dramatic change of events. The Holy Spirit is described as being “in” us. We have heard this before but what does it mean that the Holy Spirit is “in” us? Over the next several minutes I will explore the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Entire books have been written about the Holy Spirit. I read one recently that was written by the late Dr. Billy Graham. I also used material from Dr. David Jeremiah, Senior Pastor of Shadow Mountain Community Church in San Diego, Ca so these are my primary sources for this message, and I give credit to both gentlemen.

First let’s understand that religion insists that acceptance with God is tied to obedience to him. Do enough (i.e. obey) and you will be accepted by God. But Christianity is the opposite. In Christ God makes us his child and then asks us to obey. A totally different process. This is the process that Paul follows in Romans 8. He tells us that the person who has been blessed by the Father is to respond obediently to the Holy Spirit who lives within him. Yes, it is wonderful to be a child in the family of God, but it comes with some responsibilities. We are obligated to live in a new way even though as believers we are by no means capable of obedience on our own. We all learn that if we try to live the Christian life on our own strength, we will be a failure. And we do fail, don’t we? We’ve all gone down that road. Frankly the Christian life is not hard, the Christian life is impossible, apart from the Holy Spirit. So what God does is put us in his family, then tells us some things that we need to do and then he gives us the Holy Spirit to help us do it. But there is a wonderful cooperative that goes on here that we can’t forget. Yes, God wants us to obey but he also gives us what we need to obey. This is sticky for a lot of people. They say, “I’m a Christian, I’m just going to hang out and let God do his work.” “I’ll let go and let God,” they say. They don’t want to lift a finger to help themselves, as they think God’s is going to do it all. Yes, God wants us to obey and in the process of obeying, he helps us by his Holy Spirit. But we can’t duck our responsibility.

The Bible says we’re to (Phil. 2:12-13 HCSB) *…work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;****13****for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*

God is doing his good work in us. He has put the Holy Spirit in us. He wants us to take steps of obedience. He gives us the Holy Spirit to help us become the people God wants us to be.

1. **We are responsible to the Holy Spirit.**

Rom. 8:12-14 (NIV)

***12****Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it.****13****For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. 14 For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.*

Before we became Christians we didn’t have any choice. You might have thought, “Well before I became a Christian, I was a pretty good person, and I didn’t do all the bad things. I did some things that I shouldn’t have done.” But what do the scriptures have to say about that?

Rom. 3:10-12 (NIV) *As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands;  there is no one who seeks God.  All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.”*

If you wonder just how corrupt we were read Romans 3 this week and you will be totally convinced.

Even our motives are bad before Christ comes to live within our heart. But when Christ comes, he doesn’t take away the old nature, he just gives us a new nature and enables us to live our lives according to his will.

Rom. 8:10 (HCSB)*Now if Christ is in you, the body is deadbecause of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*

And that means that when Christ comes to live within our heart, he brings life with him. The bible calls it abundant life, new life, real life. We may not understand exactly what happens to us when we become Christians and the process we go through, but something dramatically changes.

1. Cor. 5:17 (ESV) says*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*

Something happens when the Spirit of God comes to live within us. Our sins are gone, our guilt is history.

Everything about life has changed for one simple reason that God loved us and sent his Son to die for us and in the process gave us his Holy Spirit to live in our hearts.

And we then are responsible to live this new God-given life and put to death those things which get in the way.

Now here’s where we are going to find out how we cooperate with God in the living of this Christian life.

1. **We are reinforced by the Holy Spirit in our obedience to God.**

Rom. 8:13 (NIV) *For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.*

When we become a Christian, we still have the old nature. If you and I are honest with ourselves, we know that. If you doubt that, just ask your wife or husband. They will verify the fact that you still have the old nature!

So we don’t get a chance to eradicate the old nature. Paul is not telling us here that there is something you can do make all of those things that are still part of the old nature go away. Rather he says: You can crucify the deeds of the old nature. Can we get rid of the old nature? No, but you can take care of the things the old nature wants you to do, and you can deal with them.

Paul says that as Christians, we will discover that things from our former life that are slipping back into our life and are starting to take hold. When you become a Christian, you don’t simply get rid of old experiences and sometimes things that were true of you before you became a Christian, that’s what scriptures call the “flesh”. Sometimes those things surface in our life like the pesky mole in “whack a mole” game. One day you say, “Man, what am I doing here? I’m a Christian. Why is that happening?” Paul says that when those things happen, you have to crucify those things and you have to take that responsibility and deal with them. We don’t just sit around and say, “Well, I’m just going to wait for God. Maybe he’ll take it away.” No, he won’t. God is not going to do for you what you’re unwilling to do for yourself. But by the Holy Spirit’s power, he will help us obediently do what he asks us to do.

What does it mean to crucify the flesh? There are some characteristics of crucifixion that we all know from Mel Gibson’s *The Passion* movie.

Crucifixion is personal. You have to do this yourself. This is not a corporate deal. This is not something we do together as a church. We don’t come together on Sunday and, together, this weekend, we’re all going to crucify the things in our body that shouldn’t be there. No, you have to do this yourself.

Crucifixion is painful.

So what happens is that you realize that there is something in your life that you know shouldn’t be there. You’re a Christian. You’re a child of God. You’re in the family of God. You’re a privileged person. You’re in God’s family. He put you in his family. And when you are in God’s family, he has certain expectations of you and some of the things you may be doing right now are not on his list of things he expects you do. So you have to deal with that. That’s what the Scripture says. You do it personally. And you do it painfully.

How many of you know sometimes those things get in your life and they really get attached to you and it’s not easy to say “no” to them.

Here’s what Pau says: “However painful it may be, crucify it. Deal with it.”

Also, crucifixion is pitiless. If you watched the crucifixion scene in The Passion, you may have been moved to tears. When the Romans put Jesus on the cross, you saw how ruthless it was. There is a lesson there for you and me. We have to deal with the things in our body—in our life that aren’t godly in the same way that the Roman soldiers dealt with Jesus Christ on the cross. That’s what it means to crucify the flesh. They put nails in his hands and in his feet and it was pitiless. Sometimes Christians will say, “Oh, yeah, well I know I’m doing some things. But I’m sure that one of these days I’ll get past them. When I turn 80 this will all go away, right?”

No, how many of us have come to realize that there are things in our lives that shouldn’t be there, and they don’t naturally go away? You have to confront them. You have to deal with them. And the whole idea of crucifixion is to help us understand how brutal we need to be with the things that are in our life that ought not to be there. We are Christians, we are children of God. The Holy Spirit lives within us. And there are just certain things that we allow ourselves to get into and when we do that it just destroys the peace and joy and the life that God wants us to know. When we deal with those things God will bring back that sense of peace and joy and life that we once knew before all of these things started to reappear. I hope this is helpful to you because what I want you to realize is that you can know the joy of the Lord in your life as a Christian. When he identifies something in your life, it may not be anything like a relationship. It might be a simple thing. It can be television. It can be the Internet. You all know that there’s a list of things that can get into your life and start messing up your relationship with God. Whatever they are, just be determined in your heart, “I’m not going to tolerate that. I’m going to mercilessly beat it to the fullest extent and get it out of my life.” The Holy Spirit reinforces us when we take that responsibility. We sense him coming along to help us.

1. **We are Ruled by the Holy Spirit**

*Rom. 8:14 (NIV) For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.*

What does it mean to be led by the Spirt of God? Well, if you’re a Christian God gives you the Holy Spirit. When you become a Christian, something really does change in your heart. The Holy Spirit is like the automatic sin detector in your life. You know, the Holy Spirit can make you really uncomfortable if you are doing something you shouldn’t do. He comes to be your guide, he comes to be your tutor, your teacher, your leader. When the Holy Spirit is in your life, you have a whole new sense of direction. The Holy Spirit loves to take the Word of God and help you understand how that Word of God relates to your life. When you are reading a portion of scripture a hundred times over, but all of a sudden, now you’re a Christian, and you really want to walk with God, and you read and the verse jumps off the page. That’s the Holy Spirit in your heart is like a computer program searching the hard drive of God’s Word to retrieve the truth that leads and guides you. The Holy Spirit leads. He leads in godliness.

But he also leads us in general. Here is a very good summary about the Holy Spirit and how he leads written by John Phillips in his commentary on Galatians.

*“The Holy Spirit never coerces, never compels, never puts on pressure, and never bullies. He does not drive, he leads. He leads, we follow. He leads us into all truth. He leads us in the path of righteousness. He leads us step by step. He leads gently, understandingly, unerringly. He leads us in our daily quiet time. He leads us by the counsel of Spirit-taught men. He leads through the circumstances of life. He leads by witnessing with our spirit in the innermost recesses of our being. He leads by quickening our conscience. He leads by encouraging us or by restraining us, by assuring us or reproving us. He leads but never drives. He never gives us that “now or never” feeling or that, “Do this or else,” urging. He leads and we follow one step at a time.”[[1]](#footnote-1)*

The Holy Spirit is the gentle leader of the Christian. It’s the gentle inward awareness that God is with you, that he is in you, and if you listen carefully to his sweet voice, he will take you where he wants you to go.

When you become a Christian, the Holy Spirit comes to live within you to encourage you from the inside out to be the person God wants you to be.

1. **We are Released by the Holy Spirit**

So now you are in the family of God, you’ve got the Holy Spirit, you’re dealing with the things in your life that shouldn’t be there, and God says:

***15****For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”* (Rom. 8:15 ESV)

According to this verse we have been brought into the family of God through the process of adoption. The word for adoption in the Greek language is really interesting. It means to place a son. That’s what God has done for us. He’s adopted us into his family. I hope that we realize that we don’t have the right to be in God’s family. We don’t! Somebody had to do something for that, so God took us out of whatever we were in and when we accept Jesus Christ as our Savior, we become the children of God. The bible says when you’re adopted you become God’s child. Now, the other thing that happens here is also remarkably interesting. When you are adopted, you get to call God by a new name. Because the Bible says that when you’re adopted, God’s name is Abba Father. Let’s explore that for a minute. That’s one of the most tender terms in the Bible. It actually means Daddy of if it were a grandchild, it would be Pappy or Papa. It was an ordinary family word in the days of Jesus earthly ministry. Abba was a common word. It conveyed intimacy, tenderness, dependence, complete lack of fear. Modern English equivalents are Daddy or Papa. In other words, an everyday toddler could call their father “Daddy.”

Now, here is the interesting thing about this term: no Jewish person, no Old Testament character, would have ever dreamed of using this very intimate term to address God.

When you become a part of God’s forever family, when you are adopted into his family, you end up gaining a relationship with God that gets away from all of the perception “God is so far away”. Now God becomes so dear to you, you call him, “Abba, Father.” You refer to him in an intimate term that’s reserved only for people who are in the family. If you are not a Christian, you don’t get to do that. In fact, Father is the very term that Jesus used to teach us to pray. How are we supposed to pray? *“Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by your name.”*

Please remember that when we are afraid, when we’re filled with terror, that’s when we cry out “Abba, Father.” He hears us when we’re at our lowest point. I can’t think of anything more wonderful and glorious than to know your heavenly Father cares about you. When you cry out to him, “Abba, Father,” he hears you.

1. **We are Reassured by the Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit comes to reassure you.

(Rom. 8:16 ESV) *“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God,”*

Paul is not saying that the Holy Spirit bears witness to my spirit that I am a child of god, but rather that the Holy Spirit witnesses **with** my spirit that I am a child of God. In other words, at the same time that I am praying and calling God my Father from within my spirit, the Holy Spirit is doing the same thing from within me so that there are two who call God the Father every time I pray: the Holy Spirit and my spirit. It’s dual evidence of my sonship.

When I call God “Father” the Holy Spirit is witnessing right alongside me.

He's saying, “Yes, yes, <insert your name> is your son or daughter, Father.”

He is yours. She belongs to you.”

1. **We are Rewarded by the Holy Spirit.**

***17****and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified with him.* (Rom. 8:17 NKJV)

In this verse, the Bible tells us that in the future, because we’re in God’s family, certain things are true.

First of all, we’re God’s children. If you’re in the family, he’s Abba Father. Who are we? We are the children of God.

(John 1:12 NIV)***12****Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—*

(1 John 3:1 NIV) ***3****See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him*.

Not only are we children the bible says in this verse that we’re heirs. We’re heirs of God.

An heir is one who has not yet received his inheritance but is anticipating it.

(Rom. 8:16 NKJV) ***16****The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,****17****and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*

One of these days we’re going to inherit eternity. We’re going to be with the Lord forever. We’re going to be heirs with God. But here’s the most important term in this verse. We’re not just children, we’re not just heirs. We are joint heirs. That’s what it says. Joint heirs with Jesus Christ. What does that mean? Well, let me explain to you what it means because it’s one of the best truths in the whole passage.

If a man dies leaving a large farm to four heirs,[[2]](#footnote-2) the estate is divided evenly, and each heir receives 25% of the whole. But if a man leaves a farm to four of his sons as joint heirs, then each son owns the whole farm. Each one can say, “This house is mine. Those barns are mine. Those fields are mine.” When the Lord tells us that we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ, what he is saying is that God the Father has given to the Lord Jesus Christ his inheritance and everything he gave to the Lord Jesus Christ he gives to you. We are joint heirs with Jesus Christ. Everything God gives to Jesus; he gives to us. We’ll get not just a fourth of what we got, not just a half of what he got. Because we’re joint heirs, we own the whole farm, Wow! When I read what God says about Jesus Christ concerning the future, it’s true of me. Why is that? Because I’m a joint heir. So let me ask you, are you going to live like you are an heir with Christ or are you going to scrounge around just trying to get by as a Christian? Some Christians say, “I try to live as close to the edge as I can without going over the edge.” And what they mean by that is, live as carnally as you can as a Christian, just don’t step over the edge and do something that will ruin your life. We should be trying to live exactly the opposite way. Live so close to Jesus that we are not even tempted by some of this stuff. Don’t live like you don’t have any inheritance, because you have an inheritance that is the same as that which was given to Jesus Christ. We are joint heirs with Jesus Christ! Let’s go forward committed that we going to live like that. We’re going to live according to our privilege. We are children of God. We are to be proud to be children of God. We’re going to live like children of God. Hallelujah!

1. Phillips, John *Exploring Galatians: An Expository Commentary* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Barnhouse, Donald Grey *Romans Volume 3: God’s Grace, God’s Freedom, God’s Heirs* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)