

The New Age of the Spirit

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[0 : 0 0] But just for a few minutes, if you want to close, finish off our series, we've done the last maybe two or three months on the Holy Spirit. And it's been incredible to do that. It's been a great opportunity to think about the role that the Holy Spirit has.

And I think that for me, certainly what I've thought about more than I've ever thought about before in listening to Cori and also preparing sermons on it is the Holy Spirit's pivotal role with us, with people, with you and me.

In creation, as the one who inspires and opens up God's Word to us, the one who brings us as Christians new life in Christ, one who makes us holy, the one who helps us to become holy, who's the one who walks with us, whose likeness we bear as fruit, who gifts us as the gifts we need for service, and the one who we can grieve.

So we've seen that over the last number of weeks, all these different aspects of the work of the Holy Spirit, very personal focus of God in our lives. You talk about personal attention.

You know, as Christians, we often accuse God of being distant, being disinterested, uncommunicative, silent. And yet here we have the third person of the Trinity whose particular and total focus in many ways is you based, is for us in our lives.

[1 : 3 8] You know, you are attended to as a Christian by the most powerful, important and unique being in the universe. He came for you.

He died for you. He rose again for you. He's brought you to spiritual life. He dealt with and crushed the greatest trauma that you would ever have been likely to have faced death and hell itself.

And He promises to take you through all the battles and the many traumas that we face in life and never to leave you. That's the commitment and the person of the Holy Spirit.

And even then, even in the struggles when sometimes we maybe feel distant from Him, the phrase that quite often you hear from me here is, the best is yet to come.

And that is a really significant and important way that we want to finish this series on the Holy Spirit because there's still for us as Christians and not yet.

[2 : 4 6] There's still for us something better. Even in the best days, we have the best days spiritually we have here. They're still and not yet. We're coming towards Christmas.

This is first day of Advent and I love Christmas. Christmas is a good time of year. And as a dad, what I always really enjoyed doing when the kids were wee, I was getting up on Christmas morning.

Early, Katrina used to say that I was more excited than the children. I would get up early before they were up and my job was to set the table for Christmas breakfast and set the fire in the freezing cold big room that identity were freezing in today with their blankets on to keep them warm and get their presents in place.

And I would get all that done. And as I was doing it, the kids, of course, would wake up and they would have the door closed. They'd stand at the door and say, can we come in? Can we come in now? And I would say, not yet, not ready yet, not time.

So there was this just amazing sense of anticipation within them as they waited to get in. And I think there's an element of that for us as Christians that the Holy Spirit, as we come to the end of this short series for all of us, for you and me as Christians, you say, I'm not finished yet.

[4 : 09] Now, however you feel like in your Christian life, however maybe complete you feel, maybe you don't feel very complete. He's saying, look, I'm not finished yet.

I've got more to do. And his final work, the first point I want to make is that his final work is bringing us as Christians all of us to glory.

Now we didn't read verse 11, but it speaks about here. It speaks about the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead, dwells in you, Holy Spirit. He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

And he's reminding us that this resurrection power that brought Jesus from the dead is the power that will raise our bodies on that last day to be with Him in glory. He's going to make us perfect.

So having already been especially committed to humanity as a whole, and then to the redeemed humanity, even from the beginning, he is a task to complete, which is to make us perfect.

[5 : 12] So he's going to glorify us by glorifying Jesus in us. Jesus is the first fruits of that resurrection and we will follow Him.

And it reminds us, as we sit here this evening, that verse 11 of the importance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, because it's the guarantee of this not yet, this work that Jesus still has to do in our bodies and in our life.

And that we have this great participation to look forward to in the divine nature. Second Peter 1, through these great promises, he's given us this very great and precious promise so that through them you might participate in the divine nature, having escaped the coming corruption of the world caused by evil desires.

And we've got this great hope and this great future with Christ. There's so much yet that we don't know and we can't even imagine. Dear friends, we are now children of God and what we will be has not yet been made known.

But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. So there's this great future that He has in store for us, the Westminster Confession, our great subordinate standard.

[6 : 35] It says that the bodies of the unjust shall be the power of Christ be raised to dishonour, the bodies of the just by His Spirit unto honour, and be made conformable to His glorious body.

Not yet. He's still got work to do. But we look forward to that day. And remember, it's a great conclusion to this study that we've been making of the Holy Spirit.

It's important always to remember that He is bringing us to glory. He has got an unfinished task in our lives.

I encourage you to work hard at replacing frustration with anticipation. It's very easy in our lives to be frustrated by our weakness, by our aging, by our struggles, by our battles.

But it's important for us to at least be cognisance of anticipation, of better days to come. And in our lives to learn patience with God and with other people as well as we look forward to that day.

[7 : 48] I've also said this a lot here. I struggle with original illustrations and thoughts. But this life that we have is just the first line of the introduction of a beautiful and never-ending narrative.

This life is just what sex has seen for that incredible and great and strong future that we have, hard to imagine when we think this life is everything.

But it's only the first line of the introduction. And that's a great and significant and important truth. That's the first thing.

The second thing that I want, the other thing I want to say is, or expand on a little bit, His work is an unfinished symphony with all of us.

It's an ongoing and progressive work He's doing for us. Second Corinthians 3:18 says, And we all with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory are being transformed into His image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

[8 : 56] So there's this unfinished work that He promises that He will finish. We grasp that we have a glory in us that has yet to be revealed.

Sometimes doesn't look like it in our lives, but we believe it by faith, that there is a glory that will be revealed in our lives. Our resurrected bodies will be the Holy Spirit's completed work of divine genius.

His great creative work will be completed in our resurrected bodies. And a remarkable truth is that creation itself longs to see that day.

We read that in the passage in Romans chapter 8. The creation is longing for that revelation and that great day. And it will share in what we can call true freedom day.

Verse 21, we are told that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. So we have this great partnership that we look forward to with creation, who will all celebrate together the freedom of the finished work of the Holy Spirit.

[10 : 20] And that's a hope. It's not a vague hope. It's not a pie in the sky hope. It is based on the resurrection of Jesus.

And but yet, you know, the Bible is not unrealistic. It knows that as we wait for that great day, we struggle with birth pains. It talks about that in verse 22.

For we know that the whole creation has been growing together in the pains of childbirth until now. So there's pain and there's struggle.

We feel under threat. We're decaying. We're battling. We're unable to see the end game. But in all of this, we're called to hope and to wait patiently.

Now, I don't know anything about labor pain other than having watched it. But I'm sure that a labor pain for an expectant mother, anticipating mother is made more bearable by the anticipation of the life that is to come in childbirth.

[11 : 33] That may be part of the reason why they can endure such pain. And surely that picture speaks to us in the battles and struggles and pains of our lives if there is an anticipation and a hope of release and freedom and a future that is entirely different and entirely glorious.

And in that struggle and battle which we face, who is it that helps us on a day to day basis? Verse 26, likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness for we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

So God's Spirit helps us as the creation groans and as we don't know what to pray for, the Spirit intercedes on our behalf and He incarnates our struggles and groans before the Father.

Praying for us when we don't know what to pray for, even when we don't know what to say, do you feel you need to be articulate before the Father? Do you feel you need to know what to say?

I don't know what to say. That's fine. Just go to Him with the unspoken pains and struggles and battles.

[13 : 00] We don't need to articulate them. We're not presenting them before a courtroom where we need to articulate our defense.

We simply are crying out and sometimes we don't know what to say. The Holy Spirit is there in that great role of being our helper, especially there to be our helper.

And through that He whispers to us that the best is still to come. Those whom He predestined, He also called, verse 30, those He called, He also justified.

Those He justified, He also glorified. It's almost given in the past tense because it's so clear and so sure. This is His work. This is His guarantee.

God's honour is at stake. Nobody this morning preached about assurance, and this is our great assurance, is that He will take us through His perfection, His power, His love is on the line when He makes these promises and you doubt them at your peril.

[14 : 11] And we doubt them by misunderstanding His character. So to the young people here, I'll encourage you not to forget this truth.

It's very easy, I think, to forget when we're young because we've got all of life we believe ahead of us and many dreams to fulfill.

And it's easy to feel that life is really certain and guaranteed for us. But we know that's not. And maybe you, as young people today, I don't know it may be different.

Maybe you feel very uncertain. You feel very unsure. You feel very insecure. A couple of weeks ago there was the walk that went up.

I don't know where all that went, but it ended up at Hollywood, which was about the environment, about global warming. And the first three or four rows with megaphones shouting and seeking the good of the planet were all teenagers, were all young people.

[15 : 16] So maybe there's not the same certainty. Maybe there's not that same security. Maybe there's a feeling of insecurity. But it's important as Christians to remember this guarantee of the Holy Spirit for you as young people.

And for us as we're getting older, it's also a great hope. You know, if you feel that your best years are behind you, maybe you feel the loss of loved ones.

Or you feel that life is passing you by or has passed you by and the best has passed you by. And it does seem that the older we get, the life that we have been leading seems to just be passing swifter than a weaver's shuttle to put it in biblical terms.

Well, it's important for us all to stay strong and to give thanks for how committed the Holy Spirit is to us. Therefore we don't lose heart, though outwardly we're wasting away, yet inwardly we're being renewed day by day for our light and momentary troubles and achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

So we fix our eyes not on what is seen but what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. Who is on your side?

[16 : 40] Who is battling for you? Who is promised to finish the work that he's begun? If you're not a Christian, can I invite you to the open arms of the living God who promises to redeem and forgive you if you put your trust in Him and give you His Holy Spirit?

With all the promises and with all the particular focus He has on you, that in a sense that's the whole role that divinely, if I can speak in these terms, He's been given is to be there for you, to support you and to esteem you and to build you up and to encourage you and to never let you go.

We really need that. Let's pray. Rather, God, we ask and pray that you would help us to understand who you are and understand that you're not this great, distant, divine being who is disinterested or far away.

We know we can't see you. We know we often feel that you're away from us or distant. And that is a battle we will always face, but we are constantly encouraged to remember your promises, to remember your help, to cry out to you when we don't have answers and when we don't even have words, to remember that you have begun a work that you will sustain us in it as followers of Jesus and you will glorify us in the end.

And that will be a great day. Give us that perspective. We thank you for Sundays, which help us to remember that perspective as a resurrection day and in the bleakness sometimes of our experiences may Sundays be a bright day that maybe recalibrate our focus a little bit and remind us of the Holy Spirit's work and help us to worship and helps us in our battles to know miracles and to know impossibilities and to know sustaining strength.

[18 : 47] We thank you. Those of us who are older here will be able to thank you for the way you sustained our lives and sustained our witness way beyond what we could ever have dreamed you would and that you sustained us every day.

And we pray that you continue to do that till our last day of life here. And as we look forward to that remarkable return of Jesus when all things will be made new and even this world we find so much of it so beautiful will be made perfect and will be an amazing home for us to live in with resurrected bodies forever with Jesus.

We thank you for that hope and we pray that it would encourage and sustain us in this week that we have entered into whatever befalls us by your providence this week.

In Jesus' name, Amen.