

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND YOU

The Breath of the Lord



Man's beginning and destiny are inseparably linked to the breath of a sovereign God. – Paul Van Gorder

Poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning described man as having God's image stamped upon him and God's kindling breath within. Have you ever been in a situation where you cannot get your breath?

We may not be concerned with the air we breathe until that moment we cannot get air inside our lungs.

Mercy Me sings, This is the air I breathe, Your holy presence living in me. This modern praise song is scriptural. *Psalm 150:6 (ESV)* ⁶ *Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!*

Read Genesis 2:7 (ESV) ⁷ *then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.*

We are physical – made out of the dust and given the very breath of God. Adam was the physical progenitor (originator) of the human race and he passed his nature on to us – and that nature was sinful – a nature that separated Adam's descendants from God. And yet, from that early beginning God made plans for a way to cover sin and restore man's relationship with Him.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:45 (ESV) ⁴⁵ *Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.*

Yes, the first Adam had his characteristics stamped on the race. Jesus is the 'last Adam' and is the progenitor of the race of spiritual people. By virtue of his office as *the last Adam* He stamps his characteristics on those who trust in Him. Jesus is the life giving Spirit. His life-giving Spirit is available to all but it is not automatic.

The Last Adam's Spirit Convicts Us

Read John 16:7-11 (ESV) ⁷ *Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.* ⁸ *And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:* ⁹ *concerning sin, because they do not believe in me;* ¹⁰ *concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer;* ¹¹ *concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.*

What did Jesus mean when He said that the Holy Spirit will convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment?"

This passage gives us the three-fold work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the unsaved world.

1. To convict concerning sin – The world is sinful, and one of the Holy Spirit's ministries is to convict the world of its sin. We need to remember that it is not our place to convict others of their sin. Our ministry is to be witnesses for Christ.

No amount of preaching, pleading, or pointing fingers will cause others to be convicted of their sin. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. The most basic sin of the world is **unbelief**.

The law of God and the conscience of man will convict the sinner of his specific sins; but it is the Holy Spirit, through the witness of the believers that exposes the world's refusal to trust in Jesus. After all, it is unbelief that condemns the lost sinner. **John 3:18 (ESV)** ¹⁸ *Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.*

2. To convict concerning righteousness – We are all held to a righteous standard despite the world's stubborn denial of absolute truth. The absolute truth – the righteous standard is Jesus – the perfect Lamb of God! **John 1:10 (ESV)** ¹⁰ *He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.*

When Jesus was on earth, He was accused by the world of being a blasphemer, a lawbreaker, a deceiver. Since Jesus the Savior is now in heaven, the Holy Spirit reveals Him in the Word and through the lives of believers. Jesus said of the Holy Spirit in **John 16:13 (ESV)** ¹³ *When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.*

3. To convict concerning judgment – Satan is the prince of this world and he has already been judged and we have too. We hear people say 'I'll take my chances' as if they are on trial. Sinners are already judged. **Romans 6:23 (ESV)** ²³ *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* The judgment against all of us is: Guilty! **Isaiah 64:6 (ESV)** ⁶ *We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.* Thank you, Jesus, that we do not have to stand before God in our own filthy rags. By the grace of God, when we accept Christ, we are covered with the righteousness of Christ because on the cross Jesus redeemed sinners for God and defeated Satan.

Regeneration

Without the quickening breath of the Spirit of God, we cannot be regenerated. Regeneration is simply rebirth. Remember it was God's kindling breath within that gave life to Adam as he was formed from the dust of the ground. **1 Corinthians 15:22 (ESV)** ²² *For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.*

Regeneration or rebirth is the work of the Holy Spirit. Salvation is entirely accomplished by Christ's work on the cross; however, it is the Holy Spirit who works directly to cause people to receive the Lord's great salvation. The Holy Spirit applies the work of the cross to the believer and imparts God's life into the believer's spirit causing the believer to be regenerated – REBORN!

Let's look at some of what Jesus said to Nicodemus concerning being reborn.

Read John 3:3-8 (ESV) ³ *Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."* ⁴ *Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"* ⁵ *Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is*

born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ ⁸ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

Our greatest need is for spiritual life. This is not merely a changing of our old way of life but something entirely new. The Hebrew word, ruach, is translated as both wind and spirit. The New Testament Greek word pneuma is translated as both breath and spirit. In verse 8, pneuma is rendered wind. According to Paul Van Gorder, the other 385 times it appears in the New Testament, it is rendered spirit. Therefore, verse 8 can read: *The Spirit blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.* The physical wind is a picture of the Holy Spirit. It reminds us of the Spirit’s active and powerful operation in the work of regeneration.

To become a child of God one must be born from above, and that is accomplished by God’s breath – the Holy Spirit. Van Gorder comments, “Man dead in trespasses and sins could no more become spiritually alive and enter the kingdom of God apart from the Spirit’s work than that bundle of bones, sinew, and tissue called Adam could have become a living soul without the inbreathing of God. Yes, the new birth comes by the Holy Spirit, the breath of God.”

As I contemplate this marvel of what occurs within us at the time of our rebirth into the kingdom of God, I am overwhelmed by the wonder of it all. I stand in awe of our Redeemer!!!

Read Ezekiel 36:26-27 (ESV) ²⁶ *And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.* ²⁷ *And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.*

In addition to enabling us to receive everlasting life at the time of regeneration, the Holy Spirit’s work does not end there. From the point of regeneration, He dwells within believers. It is sad that we keep forgetting this! Ezekiel shared the Word of the LORD that a believer receives both a new spirit and receives the Holy Spirit.

The work of the Holy Spirit in regenerating us is the fulfillment of God’s promise that He will put a new spirit in us. But this promise does not end with our rebirth. The second half of the promise is as good as the first half! The promise of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit comes right after the promise of receiving a new spirit. The Holy Spirit’s work, which causes believers to know sin, believe in the Lord, and receive life, is only His initial preparatory work in order for Him to indwell us.

The Holy Spirit’s purpose of indwelling the believers is to reveal the Father and the Son in our lives of grace. The day of resurrection and the day of Pentecost are over; the Holy Spirit is here. When we only realize that we have been reborn in Christ and do not recognize the reality of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we miss living in the Spirit.

Baptizes

Read 1 Corinthians 12:13 (ESV) ¹³ *For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.*

The baptism of the Spirit occurs at the time of our rebirth when the Spirit enters the believing sinner, gives us new life, and makes our bodies the temple of God. All believers experience Spirit baptism at the moment of rebirth. After the Lord Jesus ascended to the heavens, the Spirit descended from heaven for the purpose of dwelling in His Bride – the church. This is why believers experience the ‘family connection’ with other believers – it is because we are all baptized into the same family by the same Holy Spirit and we are ‘blood relations’ to one another through the blood of Christ.

Spirit baptism should not be confused with believer’s baptism. Believer’s baptism is not essential for our salvation but it is essential for our witness to the world that we belong to Jesus. Believer’s baptism is the act by which a believer in Jesus Christ chooses to be baptized in order to give testimony of his faith. **Romans 6:4 (ESV)** ⁴ *We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*

Believer’s baptism is an act of obedience after we have been baptized with the Spirit’s baptism. This is the New Testament pattern.

Read Acts 8:36-38 (NASB) ³⁶ *As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch *said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?"* ³⁷ *[And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."]* ³⁸ *And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him.*

While Acts 8:37 is not found in all the New Testament manuscripts, there is certainly nothing in it that is unbiblical. In the days of the early church, converts were not baptized unless they first gave a clear testimony of their faith in Jesus Christ. And keep in mind that the Ethiopian was speaking not only to Philip but also to those in the caravan who were near his chariot. He was an important man, and you can be sure that his attendants were paying close attention. Water baptism is the first step of obedience in following Christ. Believers should be baptized. But, believer’s baptism is the *result* of salvation not a *contributor* to it.

The Spirit – the very breath of God living in us. In nature we see how the presence of wind can quickly ignite a spark and fan that spark into a forceful fire. The Spirit’s wind can fan into flame the gift of God within us. **1 Thessalonians 5:19 (NIV)** ¹⁹ *Do not put out the Spirit's fire;*