

The Gospel of the Covenant Is the Pilgrimage to Salvation

Preparing For Pentecost

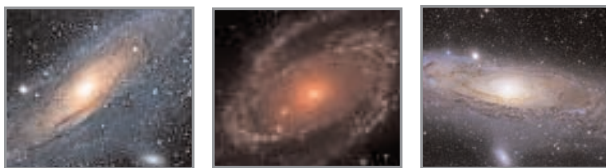
By the Indwelling Holy Spirit—the Spirit of Christ—God Reveals Himself

Please prayerfully take your time going through each section of this lesson and consider both the information and the questions. Your heartfelt responsiveness and determination matter to our Lord, so don't try to complete an entire lesson at once. Also, you'll reap greater benefit if you go through each lesson with others close to you.

“For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse” (Romans 1:20).

Why would the Holy Spirit inspire Paul to write this truth about God? Because the King of our universe is far, far greater than even Bible words can capture! Creation is a magnificent way through which He reveals His eternal power and divine nature, for through His creation He wants you to develop an *awesome regard* toward Him.

By our Lord Jesus all things were created and in Him all things hold together (Colossians 1:15-17). With that in mind you can have complete and utter confidence in both His indwelling Spirit’s power and His purpose for your life. If you want to see how truly mind-blowing our God is, see Paul Wilbur’s *Nobody Like You*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GwlMG1y2i2o>



Think about it. Atheists and evolutionists look at the universe and conclude that nobody is big enough to create it. But a follower of Jesus views creation and is filled with reverent awe that the *God Who loves them* created it all!

- Have you ever looked at creation, specifically the heavens, just to discern the immensity of our God’s eternal power and divine nature?
- If you have, did you find yourself filled with awe as you realized how truly great He is?

Consider two more ways our heavenly Father assures us of His reality and of His amazing love for His creation:

1. The resurrection of our Lord Jesus is our Father’s *visible sign* to all humanity that His Son’s sacrifice on the cross as atonement for our sin was accepted by Him.

Think about it. If our Lord hadn’t risen from the dead, we would never have verification that His Father accepted His sacrifice on our behalf. Through the resurrection our heavenly Father wanted all of mankind for all time to be assured that our Lord’s atonement for sin *was* accepted, and that no one could do anything more regarding their sin except to confess and repent and be reconciled to God through Christ (2 Cor. 5:17,18).

2. The indwelling Holy Spirit reveals Himself to the born again person through signs and spiritual gifts (see Romans 12:7; Mark 16:17). These manifestations assure the spiritually reborn of His presence *in them* and of His power to work *through them*.

The Holy Spirit isn’t a passive presence within the born again. What a wonder that you have not only *intimacy with our Lord* through the Spirit but also *His power* to do the will of your Father in heaven!

“For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power” (1Corinthians 4:20).

**Everyone Who Is Born Again
Is Indwelled By The Holy Spirit
So That Through Their Life
The Reality Of The One True God
Can Be Revealed**

Peter's message at Pentecost encapsulates the core issues of being born again:

“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:38,39).

From that Pentecost when “all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them” (Acts 2:4), the indwelling Holy Spirit assures the born again of His presence. Let's look at some examples of this comforting truth:



“While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, ‘Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have’” (Acts 10:44-47).

This same physical testimony to the Holy Spirit's presence was manifested when Paul encountered certain believers who hadn't heard of the Holy Spirit:

“When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied” (see Acts 19:1-7).

We're *not* saying that speaking in tongues or prophesying are the only signs of the Spirit's presence, since that position isn't scriptural:

“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good... All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and He gives them to each one, just as He determines” (1Corinthians 12:7,11).

A manifestation of the Holy Spirit is something that others can recognize as coming from Him through you. Have you ever seen a demonstration of the Holy Spirit's abiding presence in you? If not, don't let this Pentecost go by without experiencing His presence and power as Lord Jesus assured His first followers:

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

His promise to His earliest followers remains for you as well: *“The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”*

- A word of warning if you *don't* experience the Holy Spirit working in and through you:

Do you live like a Deist? A Deist believes God exists, but that He isn't directly involved in the world nor does He interfere with His creation. A Deist sees no need for the Holy Spirit, for Deism pictures God as the great “clockmaker” who created the clock, wound it up, and let it go. Consider this: If Jesus isn't Lord of your life with His Spirit guiding and empowering you, then you are a Deist, even if you won't acknowledge it.

“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good” (1Corinthians 12:7).

“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms” (1Peter 4:10).

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are imparted to *each and every one* who is born again. These are His means for that person to live empowered by Him in order to serve others. Spiritual gifts are our Lord’s **division of labor**—*specific individual empowerments cooperating responsibly together to extend His Kingdom*. A spiritual gift is *Spirit-empowered*, something you didn’t have until He took up His dwelling in you. This supernatural work distinguishes spiritual gifts from human talents or abilities or aptitudes.

A gift of the Spirit is a God-empowered *capacity for service* that’s bestowed on every born again person without exception (see 1 Corinthians 12:7).

These gifts are *spiritual empowerments*, not natural talents, so the Lord can display His power through His people and receive glory and praise through them (see Hebrews 2:3,4.)

For more on spiritual gifts, please read Romans 12:4-8; 1Corinthians 12:4-11, 14:1-33; 1Peter 4:11. If the Holy Spirit is dwelling in you, it’s essential for your service to others that you know:

1. Your own spiritual gift(s).
 2. How your spiritual gift(s) functions with those of others in your relational arena.
 3. In which specific faith community the Spirit wants you to use your spiritual gift(s).
- > The specific spiritual gift(s) you are given reveal the Spirit’s purpose for your life.
- > The Spirit’s purpose for your life depends on how He will use your spiritual gift(s) to serve others and glorify our Father.

One raindrop may not impact anyone, but the combined power of many drops can make a big impression.

Almost all the 1,050 commands in the Newer Testament are given in the plural so that *collectively* a marriage or family or faith community will make them their way of life. The mutual coordination of spiritual gifts is no different:

“Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others” (Romans 12:4-5).

*“The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. Now you are the **body of Christ**, and each one of you is a part of it” (1Corinthians 12:12,27).*

We in Christ are called to a *collective commitment* to use our gifts to serve each other: *“Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that **build up the called-out-ones**” (1Corinthians 14:12).* At the same time we are called by our Lord to extend His Kingdom: *“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will **be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth**” (Acts 1:8).*

- Can you identify your own spiritual gift(s)?
- If so, how have your gift(s) been working together with others in the faith?
- Are you in your current faith community because you’ve recognized that your spiritual gift(s) are needed there?
- Since one purpose of spiritual gifts is for the common good, can you cite examples of how five of the various gifts of the Spirit are being used in your faith community?

No Square Pegs In Round Holes

While we were administrating a retreat center years ago, a group of pastors met there each month. At one of the gatherings a pastor mentioned that he had used a spiritual gifts survey among his flock, similar to the one in our book, **God's Instruments For War: *Discovering and Coordinating Spiritual Gifts as Weapons of Warfare.***

<<http://www.restorationministries.org/pdf/books/gifr/GIFREntireBook.pdf>>.

After this pastor and the leaders of his congregation reviewed the results, they found that many of the people ministering there weren't operating in their gifting(s). Several of those he talked with admitted they were serving in a particular capacity simply because "*somebody* had to do it." He realized that whether Sunday School teachers or within other ministries were square pegs in round holes, and it took several weeks to get the correct "pegs" in the right "holes." He later told the pastors' group of the



wonderful changes that had taken place in the congregation as people began to operate with the Spirit's empowerment.

No Spirit, No Empowerment

Another pastor in the group tried to use the same spiritual gifts survey in his congregation, but after many weeks only about half the people had filled it out. One day he called me (Mike) to ask how he could encourage the rest to fill out the survey. I asked him to have his elders individually go through the list of people in the congregation and put an 'X' next to anyone they doubted was born again.

When they compared those lists with the list of people who didn't complete the survey, they made an interesting discovery. The same people they'd discerned weren't born of the Spirit had also not completed the gifts survey.

There's a powerful message in this: **People who aren't born again have no spiritual gift(s)!**

The Holy Spirit Using Your Spiritual Gifts *Collectively* Mirrors A Flock Of Sheep

*"For we [collectively] are to God the **aroma of Christ** among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life..." (2Corinthians 2:15,16).*

Sheep have a flock identification gland in their front hooves. When they rub against each other, this gland gives the flock members a common odor. Their strong olfactory system compels them to be close to one another—they find security in their mutual identifying odor. This is why sheep flock together.



This also describes those who collectively allow the Holy Spirit to use the gifts He's given to each. The result is many "sheep" with one aroma — Jesus Christ!

"Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light" (2Corinthians 11:14).

A local 4-H'er offered us his ewe. She was a good-looking sheep and we gratefully added her to our flock. But not too long after, we noticed she was limping. Close inspection revealed the shepherd's bane: foot rot. A highly contagious affliction, foot rot destroys the hoof tissue, crippling the sheep and hindering her ability to graze. To our dismay the entire flock had been infected by her. How many hours we spent dipping reluctant hooves into copper sulfate solution and cutting away rotted tissue!



The lesson we learned from this experience has spiritual implications:

No matter how wonderfully "Christian" someone seems, you must look for evidence of the Holy Spirit in their life before you welcome them into your "flock" as family. If people without the Spirit join your worship family, you'll find yourselves being plagued by strife and discord, snuffing out the cooperation of the Spirit in your midst.

In Lesson 10 in our Gospel of the Covenant series, *Being Born Again Is to Know God and Experience Him*, we note that you can't treat someone who's not born again like someone who is. The difference is major: one is indwelt by the Holy Spirit and the other isn't. Spiritually they have nothing in common:

"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can

light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?" (2Corinthians 6:14,15).

AFTER Being Born Again

After you're born again our Lord's indwelling Spirit not only empowers you; He also enables you to understand His ways so that you may fulfill your Father's will: ***"This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words"*** (1Corinthians 2:13).

BEFORE Being Born Again

Before you're born again the Holy Spirit's only purpose is to convict you of your sin so you may repent and turn to Jesus. All other truth is impossible for you to discern without the Spirit: ***"The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned"*** (1Corinthians 2:14).

There's also a demonic implication in Paul's warning to followers of Jesus in Corinth. Those in your midst who are not born again may be among those whom *"the devil has taken captive to do his will"* (see 2Timothy 2:26). This is where someone with the gift of *discerning spirits* can be very helpful. Let us explain.

While we were administrating a retreat center in eastern Connecticut, a local news channel reported that 2,000 satanists were moving into the state to take it for Satan. In a certain congregation the pastor's wife had a check in her spirit about a particular woman who'd been attending services. Within a year this woman had become head of the Sunday School program. The pastor's wife kept praying with uneasiness about this situation.

During a time of congregational worship one Sunday morning, she saw a grotesque demon sitting on that woman's shoulder. Horrified, she went to her husband and the elders and insisted

they look into this. When they met with the woman, she admitted she'd been sent into the congregation by the satanists to water down the Sunday school curriculum. Once her cover was blown she left.

- Are you in a Bible study, Sunday School, or faith community in which the born again are regarded the same as people who are not? In other words, do you recognize that they are *pre-cross* rather than *post-cross* and still need to be evangelized?
- If no one is distinguishing the difference between people who have yet to encounter Jesus as their Lord and those who have been born again, have you noticed how little dependence there is collectively on the Holy Spirit as your source of guidance and empowerment?
- When you study God's Word together, are you more focused on understanding it like you would an academic text, or on seeking *rhema* to guide you in keeping in step with the Holy Spirit as called for in Galatians 5:25?

Paul describes the *collective participation* of each person in a gathering of the born again: "When you come together, **everyone** has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. **All of these must be done for the strengthening of the called-out-ones**" (1Corinthians 14:26).

Is Paul describing a gathering of *your* faith community? If not, why not? Can it be that people in your community or those who are leading it are not born again and/or are quenching the Spirit's work in your midst? Has the devil infiltrated your faith community to keep you passive and ineffectual?

- Finally, do people who know you well in the faith attest that they can identify your spiritual gift(s)? Can they describe how they've relied on the gift(s) of the Holy Spirit at work in and through you?

"So then, EACH of us will give an account of himself to God"

(Romans 14:12).

If the Spirit of our Lord is in fact indwelling you, then you will have *both* an individual and a collective burden with others close to you in the faith. Your burden will be the same as that which our Lord Jesus had as He hung on the cross for all mankind. The *eternal destiny* of your relatives, your neighborhood, your workplace, your school will be your collective heart burden. This is the arena in which you're responsible for knowing and using your own spiritual gifts as well as the gifting of those close to you in the faith—*cooperating together* as our Lord's ambassadors.

The basic building block the Spirit uses among those who are a new creation through spiritual rebirth is the *mutual cooperation of husbands and wives, family members and close friends in the faith.* Out of these relational building blocks come larger groups of people who cooperate together for our Lord's Kingdom purposes. As a wise brother in Christ has written,

- **Every born again person has some gift, therefore all should be encouraged.**
- **No one has all the gifts, therefore all should be humble.**
- **All gifts are for the one Body, therefore all should be harmonious.**
- **All gifts are from the Lord, therefore all should be content.**

