

Purpose of the Holy Spirit

Rick Railston

Recorded May 31, 2009

As Stuart mentioned in his sermonette, on this day a miracle occurred, and it was the coming of God's Holy Spirit. Let's turn over to Acts chapter 2 and see the first four verses of one of the meanings of this day that we memorialize, and we look back on a time that was awesome. Put yourself in the shoes of the early disciples as we read these verses. Because here they are, gathered together, and they don't know what God has in store for them, or what God has in mind for them. Kind of like us today! And this happened – Acts 2 verse 1.

Acts 2:1 - And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

There's a message there – one accord, one place.

Acts 2:2 - And suddenly there came a sound from heaven...

The Greek word for "sound" is Strong's 2279 and it's "echos". We get our English word "echo" from that Greek word. It means a loud or a confused noise. If you've been to the Grand Canyon and yelled, you get the echoes bouncing back and forth. It's loud and it can be confusing because the echoes step on each other. Or it can mean a roar. But this sound from heaven came, and for those of you that have ever been in an earthquake, you not only feel the ground shaking, but you hear this tremendous roar. My suspicion is it was something akin to that.

Acts 2:2-3 - And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

Here's the point:

Acts 2:4 - And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit...

And as a witness to that, they began to speak in other languages. But the fact is, that all those present who were gathered together with one accord at one place, were given God's Spirit. And the fact that there was a noise indicated to them that this was something special. This is something unique, something different than you have ever experienced before.

One of the most difficult concepts to understand is the Holy Spirit and how it works, and we have talked about that before in other sermons. But I have another question for you today:

Why was the Holy Spirit given in the first place? What is its purpose? Why was it necessary?

We need to understand that, particularly at this juncture in our spiritual lives. Why was the Holy Spirit given and what was its purpose and why was it necessary? We have to set the stage to understand this. For point number one:

1. We have to understand what man's nature is.

Mr. Armstrong over the years quoted these scriptures that I'm going to give you, they are memory scriptures, you know them by heart. He pounded them into us in the early years, at least of my calling, back in the 1960's. Jeremiah 17 and verse 9 – we know that by heart don't we? What does it say?

Jeremiah 17:9 - The heart is deceitful above all things...

The Hebrew word for "deceitful" is Strong's 6121, and it's "aqob" and it is translated once in the Old Testament as "crooked". It is translated another time, right here, as "deceitful". It's translated a third time, it only appears three times, as "polluted". We are told that the heart of man is deceitful, it is crooked, it is polluted. He says:

Jeremiah 17:9 - ...it is desperately wicked: who can know it?

That is the heart and the mind that we inherited when we were born. Human nature, we call it.

The second scripture defining man's nature is Romans 8 and verse 7, a New Testament confirmation of what we just read in Jeremiah 17.

Romans 8:7 - Because the carnal mind is enmity against God.

It's not subject to God's law and neither indeed can be. And that Greek word "enmity" is Strong's 2189 and it's the Greek word "echthra" and it's translated "enmity" in the King James, but it means "hostility" or "hatred". So we are in a world that is hostile towards God, that hates God, and we have a human nature that is hostile toward God, that hates God, and that is desperately wicked and deceitful, polluted and crooked. That's our nature.

Okay, so that's the first point. Let's look at the second point and contrast that with God's nature.

2. What is God's nature?

We could spend a whole sermon on that, or a series of sermons, but we are only going to quote one verse, and that's in I John 4 and we are going to read verse 8 and verse 16. Because again, Mr. Armstrong used to say that if it's twice in the bible or if somebody says it twice, it's obviously very important and we need to take heed about what we hear and what we read. Christ said you shall know them by their fruits. He says it twice in quick succession.

Here in I John 4:8:

I John 4:8 - He that loves not knows not God; for God is love.

And as I have said before, He doesn't have love, He is love. Notice verse 16:

I John 4:16 - And we have known and believed the love that God has to us. God is love; and he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him.

Those are things that we can't forget. People over the years seem to have gotten away from those basic, basic concepts. If you say you dwell in God than you should have God's love. And of course I John is replete with examples of that. So we have seen in the first point that we have man's nature, which is wicked and polluted and evil, and then in the second point we know that God's nature is love – love for others. Creating the universe and populating the universe so that He can have a family and show His love to other beings, ultimately in time. Now that leads us to the third point, which is axiomatic:

3. If we are going to be like God, a transformation has to occur – from the wicked, evil, deceitful nature, to the nature of God.

That is why we have been called, that's why we're here. We have to transform ourselves from one to the other. A transformation must occur. Look at Romans 12 and verse 2.

The church over the years has focused on so many things, and sometimes we get away from the very basics of why we're here. The very basics of how we should live. Paul says:

Romans 12:2 - And be not conformed...

Meaning "taking the form of"...

Romans 12:2 - ...this world: but be you transformed

That means a change. How?

Romans 12:2 - ...by the renewing of your mind...

Now that Greek word "renewing" is Strong's 342 and it means "a renovation", like you would renovate a house. You take an old house, I understand they have shows on this on the cable network, where they take an old house and they strip it down and put new plumbing and new electrical systems and new sewage systems and insulation, and they go through and just reform, remake, renew this old house. That is the meaning of this word. It means a complete change for the better. And so Paul is telling us that we have to have a renewed mind, a renovated mind, a mind that is changed for the better. He goes on:

Romans 12:2 - ...that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

The only way you can prove it is by having a new mind, a transformed mind and spirit. Let's go to Ephesians chapter 4 and we are going to read verses 22 through 24.

Again, talking about a transformation that must occur in each one of us. And shame on us if that transformation does not occur. The old notion that God accepts us as we are is just not true, the bible does not support that concept.

Ephesians 4:22 - That you put off concerning the former conduct the old man...

That means we put off our former ways of thinking, our former actions, our former instincts, our former perceptions – we put away all of those. He goes on to say:

Ephesians 4:22 - ...which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts...

This is reflecting Jeremiah 17:9, that we read earlier.

Ephesians 4:23 - And be renewed...

The same Greek word in Romans 12:2.

Ephesians 4:23 - And be renewed in the spirit of your mind...

Be renovated, be changed for the better, in the spirit of your mind. See verse 24:

Ephesians 4:24 - And that you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Our job is to make sure that our nature and our character is truly righteous and truly holy, and shame on us if it's not. We need to focus on that, it's our responsibility. It's not the church's responsibility, not the minister's responsibility. It's our individual responsibility. We won't turn there, but Philippians 2:5 quoted again yesterday

Philippians 2:5 - Let this mind be in you which is in Jesus Christ.

Over the last several years I pray about this several times a day, because I don't want to have any other mind. And I do, and shame on me when I do. But I want to have the mind of Christ in me every minute of every day. I want to speak Christ's word, I want to think Christ's thoughts, I want to take Christ's actions, I want to treat people the way Christ would treat them. And sometimes we don't know, and we have to ask for help. How would Christ relate to this situation that we're in? If we have to talk to somebody, how would Christ do it? How would Christ stand up and speak? What would He say when you call somebody that's grieving, and they pick up the phone and they've lost a mate or they've just found out they have cancer? What would Christ say? Let this mind be in you. So the third point is that a transformation has to occur – from the old man to the new man, and from the old way to the new way. That transformation must occur.

Now, that brings us up to today. We've seen that man's way is contrary to God's law and contrary to God Himself. God is love, and in order for us to be like God, a transformation has to occur. Now that leads us to the meaning of this day, which is the fourth point:

4. God's Spirit, which we memorialize coming today, gives us the ability, the power, to transform us to become like Jesus Christ.

It is not a human thing. We cannot do it on our own. I have counseled people over the years who come after 10, 20, 30 years in the church and they come and say "I don't think my baptism is valid, because I still have the same problem, I did 20 years ago, or 10 years ago", and so you have to go into a fairly lengthy investigation and in many cases, it turns out they've been trying it on a human level. They didn't have God's Spirit for a variety of possible reasons, but they were trying it and they were frustrated and frustrated year after year after year, and they're at the same place they were years ago and they are so frustrated because they don't have the Holy Spirit to make that possible. It's not us, it's not our effort. It is God's Spirit in us that makes the transformation possible. God's Spirit is the mightiest force in the cosmos. Let's look at Psalm 104 and verse 30.

We can talk about nuclear weapons – Jack was talking the other day about on the Destroyer that he was in, he got into a horrible storm and they had an inch and a half thick steel plate, and the waves came over the ship so hard that it bent the plate. Inch and a half steel! And we think that's powerful – it's nothing compared to God's Spirit.

Psalm 104:30 - You sent forth your spirit, they are created...

Now how much power does that take?

Psalm 104:30 - ...and you renew the face of the earth.

How much power does that take? And God is saying, that Spirit is available in you, if you will take advantage of it! We will talk about how we do that before the end of the day today. That Spirit is available. Look at Acts 1 and the beginning part of verse 8.

Again, looking forward to that first Pentecost is something we should think about. Notice what it says:

Acts 1:8 - And you shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you...

The Holy Spirit is the power that gives us the ability to transform ourselves from the old to the new, and we cannot forget that. Prior to baptism you can only go so far. And in counseling people for baptism over the years, that's a common thing – they get up to a plateau, and they've worked and worked and God's Spirit is with them but not in them and they need baptism to go to a whole different level. They realize that and they understand that and that is kind of the lynch pin to propel them towards baptism, is that they've run out of gas. They've run out of human gas so to speak, and they want God's Spirit. Let's go over to Romans 8 and verse 10.

This concept of Christ being in us - the Chief Shepherd can actually live in us. What a concept! We need to dwell on that. The Chief Shepherd can actually live in our bodies and our minds, be in our hearts.

Romans 8:10 - And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin...

Left in the water when we came up out of the tank.

Romans 8:10 - ...but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

And the only way we can achieve righteousness, keeping the laws of God, is through God's Spirit. The Spirit then gives us a new life.

I've said this before, but I remember an evangelist in the 1970's – I was sitting out in the audience, I was so astonished I wrote it down. He said "The Holy Spirit will give fruit to us [That is true], but it doesn't change our personality or our character all that much if at all." That is absolutely not true! That was his observation – I don't know who he was looking at, but that is not the people that I know. Look in your own life and reflect on your life before you were baptized and now. We've had bank robbers and thieves and murderers and adulterers and liars, and the list goes on and on. As Paul said, some of such were you. And to say that God's Spirit can't change our character and can't change our personality? My brother is a prime example – He was baptized a few months after I was and when we grew up as two kids in El Paso, Texas, my brother had a temper. He's three years younger than I am and he's a mechanical genius. He's one of these gifted mechanics, and he built a 1934 Ford with a Chrysler Hemi engine in it while he was a sophomore at high school. But I tell you, I would be out doing something, and he was underneath the car and I could hear a wrench slip, and his knuckles barked on something and then he started barking! It was like somebody set a smoke bomb off underneath the car because all of this blue smoke was coming out with cursing and yelling and wrenches thrown across the garage and he was just ballistic. But if you met him today, he would be the most laid back, mild, meek man you've ever met. I haven't heard him raise his voice in 30 years. He has had a complete transformation of his character, of his personality, by God's Holy Spirit. We could sit here after services and talk about what's happened in each of our lives, and I know that's the case. So the fourth point is, that God's Spirit, which we memorialize coming today and we keep this day, is necessary because of its power to transform us.

We are talking about today and we are now going to relate it to our fellowship today, what's happening here today. What's happening with this group of people, like-minded people, who have come together on this occasion, right here in Moses Lake.

If our fellowship is to succeed – and it can fail, it could – but if it is to succeed, we must allow the Holy Spirit to lead us. If we do not, it will fail – I guarantee you. But if it is going to succeed, the only way it is going to succeed is if we allow God's Spirit to lead each one of us. And what Satan will try to do is get to a few people, have them behave carnally, and that's like throwing claymore mines in front of you as you walk down the street – it just cuts you off at the knees. That's what Satan would want to do. So if our fellowship is going to succeed, it's incumbent on each one of us to allow God's Spirit to lead us. And I emphasize the word "lead". Because if you want a grin sometime, turn on the television on Sunday morning and see the rantings of TV evangelists where they're jumping up and down on the stage and they're yelling and going out into the audience and slamming somebody in the head and they fall over backwards, throwing

out some gibberish, and they attribute all of that to the Holy Spirit. And yeah, there's a spirit there, but it's not the Holy Spirit! They're saying it's the POWER, THE POWER OF GOD! No, it's power alright, but the fact is, God's Spirit doesn't work that way – I hope we all know that. Notice John 16 and verse 13.

Christ was, within a short period of time, going to be taken captive and going to suffer mightily on our behalf, and He was trying to get information across to the disciples. He's talking to them about this Spirit that's going to come on them shortly.

John 16:13 - Howbeit when it, the Spirit of truth, is come...

Notice this next phrase...

John 16:13 - ...it will guide you unto all truth...

It doesn't say it will kick you into all truth. It doesn't say with a whip and a chair it will drive you into all truth, because God's Spirit doesn't work that way.

The word "guide" is Strong's 3594 and it means literally "to show the way". It just shows the way, it illuminates the path. It's translated variously as "guide" or "lead".

As Stuart was saying about the sheep, you can just kick on them and they'll just sit there. I had a similar experience – we used to herd cattle in west Texas when I was a young boy, and we'd go out in the spring and round up the sheep and the cattle. My first experience, I was about 13, flopping around on the back of a horse and hadn't learned to ride very well, and we were herding some sheep and they came across a little stream. It wasn't very wide; the sheep could just walk across it, just a trickle of water. Now this is dry west Texas, so this is, as far as sheep were concerned, an unusual sight! So they all just stopped, and they wouldn't go across this water. They just stopped, all 20 or 30 sheep, just stopped there. And there was a lead sheep, and finally, after much cajoling, you get the lead sheep across and then boy, they all come, just no big deal! Just come right across! It's interesting in that sense because the sheep needed a guide, they need a lead. God's Spirit is our guide; it is the thing that leads us.

Dorothy and I wrestled with the decision that we had to make here a couple of months ago, because we wanted to do what God wanted us to do. We went through this process for two years. We would get bits of information here and get bits of information there and this event happened and we saw that happen, and you would just agonize for two years, and you wanted to make sure that you did it God's way. You wanted to make sure that you were led by God's Spirit and not by anger or upset or emotion or whatever. It took us two years to get to the point that we said to ourselves, "okay, we are convinced that this is what God wants us to do". But it's a soft, quiet leading, guiding. God's Spirit doesn't beat you into submission. We were talking last night, you just want God to show up and say "Okay, knock, knock, knock, this is what I want you to do!" but God doesn't do that. What God does, is want you to get close enough to Him and go through the thinking and fasting process, the meditating process, the studying process, and come to it on your own as lead by God's Holy Spirit. Look at Luke chapter 4 and verse 1.

Christ was led by the Spirit. Our older brother, the pioneer of our faith, was led by the Holy Spirit. It says very clearly, He came back from Jordan and He was to go into the wilderness and be tested by Satan.

Luke 4:1 - And Jesus being full of the Holy Spirit returned from Jordan...

He was full of God's Spirit.

Luke 4:1 - ...and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness...

Did he want to go there? Probably not. Did He want to face Satan? Probably not. But He did, because He was following the guide or the lead of the Holy Spirit. Notice Romans 8 and verse 14. The one scripture definition, if you could put it in one scripture, of a Christian – another memory scripture. This sermon is so basic, but many times I find, you've got to get to the basics, you've got to get to the core of the matter, you've got to get to the foundation. Otherwise, we lose our way. Now, Romans 8 and verse 14.

Romans 8:14 - For as many as are led...

It doesn't say driven, but led...

Romans 6:14 - ...are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

It is a gentle urge. I think all of us at some time or another have had the gentle urge – you're sitting there, and you just feel that you need to pray. Or you have the urge to study, or you have the thought that "you know, I haven't talked to somebody and they're suffering" and you just have the urge to call. That is this gentle urge of God's Holy Spirit.

Now, what I'm saying is, shame on us if we don't act on that urge. If we don't act on that urge, it's like the guy laying on his couch with a beer in his hand, watching television, saying, "you know, I've got the urge to go exercise" and the conclusion he comes to is that if he lays there long enough, the urge will go away! And that is exactly what will happen with the urge to go study or to pray or to do something that we know God would want us to do. If we say no, if we ignore the urge, guess what happens? Next time, the urge won't be as strong. The next time, the urge will come longer down the road, if we say no. And over time, I have seen brethren say no and no and no, until the urge ceases. Then, guess what, they're gone! On the other hand, if they say yes, the fact is the more you pray, the more you want to pray. The more you study, the more you want to study. I hate fasting. But Dorothy and I have fasted more in the last few months than we have in a long, long time. And the fact is, the more you fast the more you want to fast, because you see the benefits. So you're saying "Yes" to that urge, but never say "No" to that urge. We won't turn there, but in I Thessalonians 5 and verse 19, it says:

I Thessalonians 5:9 - "quench not the Spirit"

If you say no, you are quenching the Spirit. It's like pouring water on a campfire – you're quenching it, and it's not as hot, and eventually it will go out. If you pour enough water, if you stir it enough and pour some more water, eventually it's gone. So if we say no to the urge of the Holy Spirit, it will be gone. Now I say that in relation to our fellowship here in point number 5:

5. We must allow God's Spirit to lead and guide us if we are going to succeed.

We are all being tested right now, every one of us in this room and God's people all over the world. But right here, right now, God is testing us to see if we are going to follow His lead or our lead. Are we going to want what He wants, or are we going to be selfish and want what we want? We are going to be tested – not just today, but in the coming months and years, we are going to be tested, and we need to keep this in mind. That if I get a head of steam up about something, am I sure it is what God wants, or is it something that I want that may not necessarily be for the benefit of the group?

Will we allow the Holy Spirit to lead us? Or will we allow our human nature to lead us? Or will we allow, as we heard yesterday, Satan to put a little burr under our saddle, and then it ulcerates and then it gets painful and then we start yelling and screaming about it. We have to be very, very careful about that.

Will we use God's Spirit to get along amongst ourselves? Because we are all different – we have different backgrounds, different educations, different economic levels, different jobs, different parents – we are all different. And yet, the thing that unites us is God's Spirit. And shame on us if we can't use God's Holy Spirit to get along and to respect the other person more than ourselves. Or to defer our wishes to somebody else's wishes. And if we allow the Holy Spirit to guide us, we will succeed. It all comes through God's Spirit – it is not a human endeavor; it is God's Spirit.

We've talked already in our discussions about having a consensus government. That means, yes, there is ministerial authority, but the input of the brethren is desired and wanted. The opinions of the brethren are taken into consideration. But I am here to tell you that consensus government only works if everybody is converted. If you have an unconverted person out there you are going to have trouble. There's going to be division and upset – people behaving carnally. If you have a group over here that are operating with God's Holy Spirit and one or two over here that are operating by human nature, you are going to have conflict, obviously. The old man and the new man are waging war right in our midst. So consensus government only works if we're converted. Consensus government will only work if we are filled with the Holy Spirit and we are close to God. It will only work that way. We will divide and split apart if we are not filled with God's Holy Spirit, if we are not close to God – because if we are close to God and filled with God's Holy Spirit, then guess what? We are going to be like-minded. If we all are operating with God's Holy Spirit and we defer one to another, we can come together and we will reach a consensus. Will everybody be totally happy on everything? Of course not. But by operating with God's Holy Spirit, they say “well I will sacrifice what I want for the good of the group”. Then consensus government will work, if we have humility combined with God's Holy Spirit, there is nothing that we can't accomplish. But if we allow human nature to reign, then we have a problem.

So that means that the burden is on each one of us. If we are going to have a consensus form of government, you can't blame the minister in that sense. I told Herald Smith, when we first started ten years ago, I said, "if we have one man rule..." and I fought and fought against it, "...if we have one man rule, all you're doing is painting a giant target on your chest" because if Satan can get to the one man, whether it's Herbert Armstrong or Joe Tkach or anybody else, if Satan can get that one man, then he's got him, he's got the whole group. But if you have a consensus form of government, where we come together, it spreads the danger out. It spreads the responsibility out. Then it becomes a burden on each one of us, and we should look to ourselves and take that responsibility. Am I letting the Holy Spirit guide me today? Right now – the words coming out of my mouth, the thoughts in my head – is it from the Holy Spirit or is it from something else? The burden then falls upon each one of us.

So will we let the Holy Spirit guide us? I am here to tell you; God is watching to see if we will do that. We say we want to follow the truth; we say we want to go God's way, and God is giving us the opportunity to do that. He is going to watch us, each one of us individually, to see if we will indeed do that. So the fifth point, is that if our fellowship is going to succeed, we must allow the Holy Spirit to lead us.

Now, the sixth point – obvious question:

6. How can I have more of God's Holy Spirit?

There are two ways. I think for most of you this is not new territory – you know the answer to this. The first way is that we must ask. It is so simple! Let's go to Luke 11 and we're going to read verses 9 through 13.

Christ says that we have to ask! In years past I can tell you, I have gone for long periods of time and I haven't asked. I haven't. But in the last couple of years, I have asked for God's Spirit several times every day, and I mean that seriously. Now, Luke 11, verse 9.

Luke 11:9-13 - And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

That's a promise, by our elder brother Jesus Christ. Verse 10...

Luke 11:10 - For every one that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened.

Clear, clear promise. Verse 11...

Luke 11:11 - If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a snake?

Of course not!

Luke 11:12-13 - Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask?

It's not talking about asking for some blessing – a new car or a home or you get this job or whatever, it is asking for God's Holy Spirit. God says if you ask, I will give. But asking isn't enough. We're not going to turn there, but you know the example of Simon Magus in Acts chapter 8. He asked the apostles, "give it to me, I want it!" – so he was asking in a wrong way. There's more to it than just asking.

The second way that we can get the Holy Spirit, is we have to exercise what we have. When we were baptized, we were given, as the King James says, an earnest, that means a down payment, a small amount in advance of complete payment – an earnest of God's Holy Spirit. So God gave it to us at baptism – He didn't flood us with His Holy Spirit, He gave us a little bit. Then it's up to us to exercise it and to see it grow. The bible tells us very clearly, we can understand the spiritual by observing the physical. There are many scriptures in that regard. Look at Romans 1 and verse 20.

God gives us analogies in the physical world that translate into lessons in the spiritual world. Here we are told a very important concept:

Romans 1:20 - For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen...

The things we don't understand, like the Holy Spirit. But He says, you can get a hint, you can get an idea.

Romans 1:20 - ...from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

So we can learn about how the Holy Spirit operates, by looking at the physical. Now what should we look at? Let's look at I Timothy 4 and we're going to read verses 7 and 8.

Paul is giving wise counsel to this young minister, trying to make sure he's headed in a right direction here:

I Timothy 4:7 - But refuse profane and old wives' fables...

Apparently Timothy was getting involved in this and he was spending a lot of time to no prophet. He says, now notice this word...

I Timothy 4:7 - ...and exercise yourself rather to godliness.

Exercise! So here's a concept of relating spiritual matters with exercise. Now verse 8, he continues the analogy...

I Timothy 4:8 - For bodily exercise profits little...

Some translations say "for a little time" – the NIV says...

I Timothy 4:8 - ...bodily exercise is of some value, but godliness is profitable unto all things having the promise of life that now is, and that which is to come.

So he is saying that physical exercise benefits you in this life and is of some value, but exercising yourself spiritually is not only a benefit in this life but in the life to come. The clear implication is that if you look at exercise physically, maybe we can learn something from God's Spirit.

When we exercise a muscle – you get a dumbbell and you start lifting, and maybe you're just starting off and it's 3 lbs, and you get tired after four or five repetitions. But then you get up to 10 or 15 repetitions, and then you go to a 5-pound weight instead of a 3-pound weight, and you keep doing that. Maybe you can only do 8 or 9, but then you get up to 10 or 15. And lo and behold, you take a tape measure and measure your bicep, and after a month or two of that, guess what? It's gotten bigger! There's more muscle because of the exercise. Now what you're doing is overcoming resistance, the weight, with your muscle. You're moving this resistance with your muscle. By overcoming resistance, the muscle gets stronger. Now there's a lesson there about God's Holy Spirit. If you say no to something, if you resist something that is evil – there's a television program that pops up and all of a sudden, it's not what you thought it was, and you know you shouldn't be watching that, but your human nature is saying "oh it's just a few more minutes, let's just watch it and see what's going on...", but God's Spirit is telling us, no we should not do that, and we walk up and turn it off. Guess what, you have overcome resistance of your human nature. The next time something comes up, now that you've done it once, it's easier the next time, and the next time. Why? Because you are exercising the spirit that God has given you. And the reverse is also true – if you don't exercise God's Holy Spirit, just like you don't exercise a muscle, guess what happens? When I had my motorcycle accident it was a couple of months before I could start exercising, and it is amazing how your muscles get smaller, they get flabby, and you lose them. The same way is true with God's Spirit. If you don't exercise God's Spirit, it gets weak, it gets flabby and it goes away. There are lessons there. An unused muscle gets soft. Unused God's Holy Spirit gets soft, and ultimately will go away. I have been in hospitals with cancer patients – God's people with cancer – and I can name several people whose biceps were as big around as my wrist at the end of the day because they had wasted away from the cancer. If we say no to God's Holy Spirit, it will waste away just as surely as that muscle will waste away. Notice second Corinthians 4 and verse 16. It tells us a principle about the renewal of God's Holy Spirit and the exercise of God's Holy Spirit.

II Cor. 4:16 - For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, the inward man is renewed day by day.

Through diligent prayer, bible study, fasting, and following the lead of God's Holy Spirit, it is renewed every day. Absolutely renewed every day! And unlike a muscle, we generate the extra muscle inside by eating and fueling our body. This is where the analogy breaks down, because when exercising God's Holy Spirit, God gives you more. It's a gift – God gives you more. If you say yes to God's Spirit, if you follow God's lead, He will give you more, and then you will have more of God's Spirit. So the next time you come into a challenge, the lead of God's Holy Spirit will be stronger because you have more now. If you follow that lead, you will get more. And you build and build and

build over the years and over the decades until more and more your mind is like the mind of Christ. That's where we want to be – through God's Holy Spirit.

And so, we have to ask the question, could God be saying to us as individuals, "I'm not going to give you more of my Holy Spirit because you are not exercising the Spirit that I've already given you!". Sometimes we plead for more of God's Holy Spirit and we have to make sure that we are exercising the spirit that God has given us. We do so by following the lead of God's Holy Spirit and by doing those things that we know are pleasing to God, that would make Him happy. So, this 6th point, how do we have more of God's Holy Spirit, we ask and we exercise. We can't forget that. And if this fellowship is going to succeed, we have to ask, each one of us, and we have to exercise, each one of us.

Now, the 7th and final point, taking what we've discussed about the Holy Spirit so far today, I want to look at a prophecy for today. It's for all time obviously. But I remember when Mr. Armstrong used to talk on the radio and he would say that the prophecy is dual. He would talk about a type and an antitype – an early fulfillment and a later fulfillment. He was absolutely correct – prophecy is dual. And what we read in the bible was certainly for that day, but it is also for our day.

7. Prophecy is dual.

So with that in mind let's go to I Corinthians chapter 11. We heard yesterday about the Corinthian church being a church more like what we find in today's world. If you do any research on Corinth at the time of the new testament, at the time of the apostles, it was somewhere like a cross between New York City and Los Angeles and Las Vegas – very much like that. Carnal, anything goes, reprobate conduct, lewd conduct, worshipping who knows what – that was Corinth. But notice what Paul was saying to this troubled church. Now, I Corinthians 11 and verse 18 through 19.

I Corinthians 11:18 - For first of all, when you come together...

Stuart was talking about this when he read in chapter 3 "I am of Apollos, I am of Paul" etc...

I Corinthians 11:18 - For first of all, when you come together in the church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and I partly believe it.

And we've heard that many times. We've read verse 19 before, but I think we've read it wrong, and I will show you what I mean.

I Corinthians 11:19 - For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

I am reading out of the King James. He says that there must be heresies among you. Now most of us, when we see the word "heresy", it's only logical that we think of false doctrine. The dictionary that I have at home is a Webster's Collegiate Dictionary and it says heresy as "religious opinions contrary to the doctrines of the church.", so that's what we think of as heresies. Somebody from the outside brings in an opinion that is

contrary to what we've been taught. But the word heresy doesn't mean that, and I didn't know that until a little while ago. One of the ladies in the church pointed it out to me – she was doing some study, and if I told you who she was she would be really angry at me! She's not in this area, but I mentioned her once before and I took heat for weeks, so I'm not going to say who it is! But I started a study about this, because you think "there must be heresies among you" and we explained that back in the days of Worldwide and the Tkach's and the trinity and all that.

When you look up the word heresy, it's Strong's 139, and it's the Greek word "hairesis", and guess what it means? It means "disunion". There will be "disunion" among you. Now that puts a whole different light on this scripture. Also, guess what another meaning of this word is? It means "a choice". That's going to be important, because if you have disunion among you, it necessitates choices. This is something we should think very carefully about. Reading that again...

I Corinthians 11:19 - For there must also be "disunions" among you...

Now the word "among" is interesting in itself too. That's Strong's 1722 and it's a preposition. In addition to meaning "among" it can mean "between you". So now we're reading the verse again...

I Corinthians 11:19 - For there must also be "disunions" "between" you...

He says, since there must be disunions between you. Why? The rest of the verse says...

I Corinthians 11:19 - ...that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

Now the Greek word for approved is "dokimos" and it means "acceptable". It means acceptable in a sense of an assay. If you remember back in the wild west when the miners were pulling gold out of the mountains, there was an Assay Office. They would bring in the gold and they would weigh it. The assayer would determine if it was pure or if it was a mix of something, and they would be able to give the miner a price for this fleck or chunk or nugget of gold. So the implication of this word is "acceptable after it is tested". So now all of a sudden this verse says....

I Corinthians 11:19 -that they which are accepted after they have been tested, may be made manifest among you.

Now the word manifest we don't use often today. It's Strong's 5318 and it's the Greek word "phaneros" and it's an interesting word because it literally means "shining". We would say today that it's like somebody putting a spotlight on somebody – they are glowing, they're shining. It can also mean "apparent publicly" or "apparent externally" – in the open. So now all of a sudden, this verse takes on a new meaning because it can be translated....

I Corinthians 11:19 - For there must also be disunions, and therefore choices, between you, that they which are acceptable may be made known among you.

Now think about that relative to what we've been through. The New Living translation says...

I Corinthians 11:19 - But of course there must be divisions among you so that those who are right will be recognized.

That's an interesting turn of phrase there. But the point I'm making is that this prophecy says there must be divisions among you, so that God after assaying you, can determine, and you can determine, which is right and which is wrong. The truth will be made known. This is a test for all of us. It tells us something astounding – that God allows divisions to come on the church, disunion on the church, and to come upon us as individuals, because we have friends and there are friends putting pressure on friends. But God is saying that He allows divisions and disunions to come on the church and us as individuals so that we must choose. And guess what He does? He leads us by the Spirit and then He watches what we're going to do. And then in that way the burden is on us. God watches to see what we will choose.

I have drawn the analogy, and I am not the first one to do this, but God's church is like a giant pull out file cabinet, and you've seen those hanging file folders in the file cabinet. Some of those folders might be labeled "Worship a man" or "Harsh authoritarian government" or "Advancing my career", and some of them hopefully would be, "Loving God with all your heart and all your mind and all your being" and "Loving your neighbor as yourself", and what God is allowing us to do today, as we get closer to the end, is file ourselves in these folders. Nobody has got a whip and a chair over us – the government of Worldwide, when that was the only choice, is all gone. That's like teenagers now leaving the house and the parents aren't looking over the shoulder. So right now you see, God is watching us, to see, in this analogy, where are we going to file ourselves? Who are we going to associate with? How are we going to label ourselves? Because He's saying here, in first Corinthians 11 and verse 19, that there must be divisions among you to make you choose to see who is correct and who files themselves in the correct folder.

My point is, at the end of all of these seven points, is we better make that choice by God's Holy Spirit. Are we going to follow God or are we going to follow human beings? Are we going to follow the way of love or the way of selfishness? Are we going to follow the way of give or the way of get? Are we going to follow the way of pride or the way of humility? And God is watching us to see. The only way we're going to do it right is by being led by God's Holy Spirit – that is the only way it will work. Let's understand that.

Now, let's wrap up. What we have seen today is man's nature and God's nature and we see this huge contrast between the two. If we are going to be in God's Kingdom and we're going to be the bride of Christ, we need to transform ourselves into the nature of God and Jesus Christ – having the mind of Jesus Christ. We've seen that that transformation doesn't occur by human effort – it occurs through and by the power of God's Holy Spirit that we're here commemorating today. We have seen that our fellowship will only succeed if we allow God's Spirit to lead us. If it is done any other way this fellowship will just be blown to smithereens sooner or later – if we do not allow ourselves to be led by God's Holy Spirit. We've also seen in this last point that there is

a prophecy that says there must be, not just then, but down through the centuries, including our time, that there must be divisions among you so that you choose and He will watch the choice we make. Are you going to follow me or are you going to follow somebody else? Are you going to follow the way of love or the way of selfishness? As I said, God is watching us.

Now, in closing, we have some reminders from three scriptures. Let's go to Luke chapter 1. We're going to look at two verses about the prophecy of Zacharias at the time of Christ's impending birth, when the angel told them that this was going to happen. We'll read verses 78 and 79, right at the end of the chapter. But notice this prophecy from Zacharias...

Luke 1: 78-79 - Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high has visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death...

And that's what happened to us when we were baptized – God's light shone on us, our mind was opened up and we began to see things that we hadn't ever seen before. But notice this last phrase...

Luke 1:79 - ...to guide our feet unto the way of peace.

I am here to tell you, one of the prime motivations for us doing what we did was to have peace, because we had no peace for two years. None, for two years, and this is supposed to be God's church, and we didn't have peace. All of us are here right now, in part, because we want peace. It was referred to today. It's been talked amongst ourselves many times. The church should be a refuge; it should be a sanctuary and a safe place for the sheep. Stuart was talking about in the barn, and it's thundering and hailing and lightning – that's the church, you go into the barn and all of a sudden, you're safe now. You're together and you're safe – that's the way the church should be. But it will only happen one way, and we find that in second Timothy 1 and verse 6. This fellowship will succeed only one way. This is an admonition to Timothy, but again it applies to us today.

II Timothy 1:6 - Wherefore I put you in remembrance...

And Paul's words are putting us in remembrance today.

II Timothy 1:6 - ...that you stir up the gift of God, which is in you by the putting on of my hands.

We must, if we are going to succeed, stir up the gift of God's Spirit, because that is the only way we are going to succeed. That is the only way. It will succeed not through any of our efforts, any human beings' efforts – certainly not any of my efforts. It will only succeed through God's Holy Spirit, and it is up to us to make sure that God's Spirit operates in our lives.

So, let us determine to use the power of God's Spirit so that we can become like Christ. So that we can be His bride, so that we can love one another and serve one another in this fellowship as we go forward.