

Msg #159 of Scripture Beneath The Surface

“Knowing God In Spirit”

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Hello! Thanks for being with us. Today I'd like to talk about spirits. All kinds of spirits. Not just the Holy Spirit of God, but also the evil spirits. This is a subject which is not fully comprehended by Christians. It's a difficult subject though because as human beings we tend to think in the natural. We tend to think along secular lines. To comprehend things in the spirit is something that flesh and blood humans don't concentrate on because they're always thinking about physical things. But as Christians, we've entered into the time when the Holy Spirit has been not only revealed unto men, but has also been given unto men, at least to those who accept Jesus Christ as Lord.

In John, chapter 3, there's the story of Nicodemus, who was a ruler of the Jews. He was a Pharisee who came to Jesus during the night trying to find out who Jesus really was. Of course, he came by night, we assume, in order to hide his actions from other Pharisees who would have condemned him for having interest in Jesus. But the most important thing was when Jesus told Nicodemus that in order to see the kingdom of God, a man would have to be born again.

Now, notice that the key word that Jesus used was the word, see. Jesus told Nicodemus that the kingdom of God had to actually be seen, and that a man could not see the kingdom of God unless that man was born again, born the second time. Nicodemus replied to Jesus with a question. He said, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter into his mother's womb the second time and be born once again this way?" It was then that Jesus answered him and told him that if

a man wanted to see the kingdom of God he would have to be born of both water and of the spirit.

Now, you must remember that it was at this time, in the beginning of Jesus' ministry on earth that John the Baptist was baptizing people with a baptism of water. Although Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews, being a member of an important religious sect which were known as teachers, still he did not fully understand the implications of John's baptism. Jesus was trying to tell Nicodemus that baptism with water was only an outward physical symbol, and that spiritual baptism should be taking place at the same time.

Many Christians stumble at this same principle, just as Nicodemus stumbled at it. The concept of having to be born both of water and of the spirit is a difficult subject even for some established Christians. But what Christians must realize is that the baptism of water is only an outward physical demonstration of what a person should actually be experiencing inwardly in a spiritual sense. If you get baptized in water, then the reason you're being baptized should be that you have become convicted of your sinfulness and you want to make a clean breast of things. You have come to the realization that you are a sinner and that you need Jesus Christ to save you from the curse of your sins. When you're baptized in water, it is only a washing of water. But the real understanding is that the washing of water is a washing that has taken place by the word of God. Ephesians 5:25-26 tells us that Christ has washed the church. He has sanctified the church and cleansed it by washing it with the water of his word.

You see, it isn't water, the physical water, that cleanses us from sin. What cleanses us is the process of being washed clean when we hear the word of God and believe it. By believing the word of God, we recognize that the word tells us that we are sinners and that we need to except Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior in order to enter into the kingdom of God. When we're baptized with water it washes us, but only in the sense that we are, at the same time, being baptized in spirit. We not only enter into the literal comprehension of water baptism, but we are at the same time understanding the spiritual impact of the word of God and our baptism is not just a physical event of washing the body but a spiritual event of being immersed in the word of God.

Jesus is the Word of God. This is plain fact. And, in order to be in Christ, you have to be completely in him. You can't be just next to Christ, but as Paul says in Galatians 3:27, "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ." Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

You see, we who are Christians have put on Christ. We are in him. Just as Jesus said in John 14:19-20, he not only dwells in the Father, but we dwell in him, and he dwells in us. We are in Christ, and therefore are members of his body. We are the body of Christ and Christ is our head. He directs us, the body, because he is the head of his body. But Jesus also said in John 14:16-17 that he would give us the Spirit of Truth, and that this Spirit of Truth would dwell in us.

When the Holy Spirit moves you, it will only move you in accordance with the word of God. If anything you do is not within the confines of God's word, then it isn't the Holy Spirit that led you to do those things.

The whole concept of being born again must not only include baptism in water but it must also include baptism in the spirit. If you are only born of water, baptized by water, then you won't be saved. In order to be saved you must not only be baptized in water but you must also be baptized in the spirit.

Now, let me make something explicitly clear. Baptism in the spirit does not necessarily mean speaking in tongues. Yes, I know I will get a lot of flack for that statement, but it's important to understand that being baptized in the spirit means that you have entered into the kingdom of God because you have believed the word of God and excepted it as your own. If you are just baptized in water because you think that will save you, then you will be disappointed on judgment day. In order to be saved you must first believe and accept God's word, which also means that you must believe in Jesus Christ as not only your Savior but also as your Lord, your Master. This is what is meant by entering into the spirit of the word. You can't just mumble the sinner's prayer in response to someone else's coaching, but must truly believe and accept the word of God, including accepting Jesus Christ as your Lord.

This is what is meant by being born again in spirit. The body, itself, can't be born again from the womb. But you can be born again if the second birth is a spiritual birth. In order for a spiritual birth to take place you must become aware of the truth of God's word and you must embrace it.

In the days of John the Baptist, it is evident that some of the people, such as the Pharisees and Sadducees, were being baptized by John but yet they didn't really believe in the coming Messiah. This is evident because of the many rulers of Israel who rejected Christ. Those rulers who were baptized in water but yet rejected Jesus as the Christ, were not really born again. They demonstrated outwardly that they accepted the teaching of John the Baptist, but their actions which followed demonstrated clearly that they had no intention of entering into the spirit of the word. They did it outwardly, but not inwardly. This is what Jesus was telling Nicodemus. If you don't believe the word, and you only act like a Christian on the outside, you won't really be saved because you really weren't born again in spirit, you only went through the motions.

To know God in spirit is a lot different than just attending church on the weekend. And the difference between knowing God by the hearing or reading of his word is good, but unless you know God in spirit, you don't really know God. The difference between knowing in the flesh and knowing in the spirit is that if you know God in spirit than you will be led to act and speak by his spirit. Many people in the Pentecostal faith churches confess to speak in tongues. They claim to be baptized in the spirit. But being baptized in the spirit is not speaking in tongues, but rather, speaking in tongues is an evidence of that baptism. Many people who claim to have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit claim it because they speak in an unknown language. But as it says in 1 Corinthians 12, tongues is a gift from God that comes from the Holy Spirit of God.

It is only one of the gifts, and every one of the gifts come from that same Spirit of God. It is not the tongues that is the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but the baptism of the Holy Spirit is being immersed in the Holy Spirit of God with your heart just as you were immersed in the water of baptism in your flesh. Now, whether you believe that every Christian will speak in tongues if they are saved or you believe some do or some don't, still, tongues is not the baptism of the Holy Spirit, it is evidence.

I suppose you're familiar with the operation of a court of law. In the courtroom, there are accusations made and there are arguments given for or against someone. However, in order for anyone to be convicted of anything the evidence which is presented in a courtroom will be weighed. It is not one piece of evidence that convicts a person of a crime, but it is all the evidence combined which either convicts or exonerates a person. Evidence is not necessarily proof. Evidence is only information which needs to be evaluated in order to see if something did or did not take place. If a person speaks in tongues, it is evidence that the person has experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit. However, it is not proof in itself. The real proof takes more than just speaking in tongues.

I've heard many people claim that anyone who speaks in tongues is automatically recognized to be saved. However, it is fairly clear that there are also people who speak in tongues who are not saved, and who do not really believe in Jesus. I, personally, have heard a movie actor speak in tongues in a movie, and although it sounded exactly like what you would hear in a Pentecostal church, still it had absolutely nothing to do with God. The movie was about American Indians who were communicating with the spirits of the dead, and it was a completely secular movie which had no message of God nor did it give God glory.

I have also heard tongues spoken on a school bus by a young girl who thought it was fun to speak like they were speaking a foreign language. When asked what she was doing, she said she found that she could do it with a little practice and then continued to demonstrate it to the other kids on the bus. She wasn't a Christian, and she wasn't even attempting to communicate with God. Now, this doesn't mean that tongues are never genuine. What it does point out is that speaking in tongues is not the real baptism, but is only evidence that the baptism of the Holy Spirit may truly have taken place. The real test of whether the baptism of the Holy Spirit has actually taken place or not will be determined as other evidence is weighed. The other evidence to be considered in addition to the person speaking in tongues is whether that person demonstrates the true spirit of Christ in their everyday actions and words.

You must be born again. You can't just claim to be born again by one piece of evidence. Besides, when a person comes to know God in spirit, it isn't something that can be proven either way. Let me give you an example of what I mean. If someone speaks in tongues, you don't know what they are saying. Tongues means to speak in a language which is foreign. It is not understood by the person who is speaking. It has to be interpreted. Now, if someone speaks in tongues, you cannot say whether or not that person was speaking good or bad, just by hearing them speak in tongues. If you don't understand what was said, you cannot judge it to be good

and you cannot judge it to be bad. In fact, even the person who is speaking doesn't know what they are saying. If they did, then it wouldn't be tongues. If the person understands, then they were only speaking a known language and not a language that was foreign to them. Therefore, when a person speaks in tongues, no one knows what they are saying unless another person who happens to be listening speaks that language themselves, or if someone interprets what was said by the Holy Spirit.

Interpretation of tongues is a gift of the Spirit, and is also listed among the gifts of the Spirit found in 1 Corinthians, chapter 12. But if tongues are spoken, and there is no other person present who speaks that language, and there is no interpretation given by the power of the Holy Spirit, then no one knows what is said. You can't judge words to be good or judge them to be bad if you don't know what was said. This is what Paul was referring to in 1 Corinthians 14:16 when he said that if someone speaks in tongues and the message of tongues is not interpreted, then how can someone else in the room who doesn't understand the words say amen to it? The word, amen, means, let it be so. If someone speaks in an unknown tongue, and you can't understand what was said, then how can you agree with the statement and say, let it be so? You wouldn't know if you're agreeing with something good or agreeing with something bad.

And my point is this. Information is not given in the form of human understanding by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit speaks to your heart, but it doesn't speak according to the understanding of flesh and blood people. The Spirit of God doesn't speak English or any other earthly language. It is the language of the spirit and it is completely foreign to earth people. Therefore, when you are born again in spirit, something must take place in you that is spirit and not just words. In addition to confessing that Jesus Christ is Lord of your life, you must also have a spiritual experience. Something must take place in your heart as well as that which comes out of your mouth. In the Spirit, you are moved with emotion. In the Spirit you are moved with compassion, with love, with understanding, with jealousy for the things of God. If you have been born again you will be moved by the good things of God.

There's a question that arises occasionally concerning the unpardonable sin. In Matthew 12:31, Jesus tells us that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven. It cannot be pardoned, no matter how many times you repent. However, Jesus made it clear that you could even speak a word against him, the Son of God, and it could be forgiven, but not against the Holy Spirit.

Now, the word, blasphemy, means, to attribute evil to. It means that you determine that someone is evil or is being bad. So, what's the difference? What is so different about saying that the Holy Spirit is not really Holy or isn't really good? If you can say that Jesus is wrong about something, or that God is not fair in one situation or another, but can eventually receive forgiveness when you finally come to your senses, then how come you can't be forgiven when you claim that the Holy Spirit is not good? Well, the answer is simply this. If you speak evil of God, or of Jesus Christ, or of anyone else you know, you will speak according to the knowledge you have of that

person or God or Jesus Christ. If you think God does something that is not fair, it is because of the knowledge you have of God that causes you to think that. However, as in all things, humans can be mistaken when they have misunderstood. If you see a person doing something and speak evil of them but find out later that what the person was doing wasn't really evil after all, then you were mistaken. You misunderstood. However, when it comes to understanding the Holy Spirit, you cannot be mistaken. The Holy Spirit cannot be known by facts or words. The Holy Spirit is only known by your heart. There are no facts to go by and no words to weigh in the balance. Whether the Holy Spirit is good or bad in your eyes is strictly a result of your heart. The only way you know the Holy Spirit is by just plain knowing what is good and also recognizing what you think is bad.

You cannot misunderstand the Holy Spirit. Just as the speaking in tongues, you cannot know what was said just by hearing the spoken message in tongues, therefore you cannot judge what was said to be either good or bad based on the words alone. Without an interpretation of those words, there can be no argument as to whether it was good or bad. Words and actions can be judged, and because of this we can misinterpret the words and actions. However, when the Holy Spirit moves you, the only thing you know is whether it is good or bad. You will know in your heart the difference between good and evil. If you attribute evil to the Holy Spirit, then it was not because of a misinterpretation of God's words or actions. It will be because you didn't like goodness when the Holy Spirit communicated with you. There can be no misunderstanding. God is good. There is no way around it. You might misunderstand God's actions sometimes and question why he does what he does, but if you finally come to the true understanding, you will realize that God was good after all, even if you temporarily had misunderstood him. But the Holy Spirit is not understood in words, and therefore you will know the Holy Spirit to be either good, or you will believe he is evil. If you truly do come to know God through his Holy Spirit, and then turn away from him, being no longer convinced that the Spirit of God is good, but believe that the very Spirit of God is evil, then you will be condemned. When you stand before God on judgment day, you will not be able to claim ignorance for rejecting God's spirit. God's spirit isn't known by his words or works, but is only know with your heart. And, once you have known God in Spirit, then if you ever think that the very Spirit of God is evil, then God will reject you. He won't give you another chance when you claim ignorance, because what you believe will not be by ignorance or misinterpretation of the facts, but by knowing.

But Christians will not be found guilty of the unpardonable sin. Christians readily recognize that God is good. No, we don't understand all things, but we certainly do know that God is good, no matter what happens. Even when Christians backslide, they still know that God is good even when they can't seem to be good themselves. The only person who can think otherwise is someone who has a bad heart. Bad thinking can be forgiven, but a bad heart has established its own destiny. There is no excuse for rejecting the truth if the truth is really known. To sin is human, because the flesh will always fail us, and will always fall short of the glory of God. But, as Jesus said in John 6:63, it is the Spirit that gives life. To know God in Spirit and to follow him in Spirit, is how we enter in at the narrow gate.