

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas
May 6, 2018

The Inner Witness of the Holy Spirit
Romans 8:14-17

8:14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

8:15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"

8:16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

8:17 and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

When I receive a new calendar, I always put "Pentecost" on the Sunday after 7 weeks of the Easter immediately. "Pentecost" means "Fifty", and the 7th Sunday after Easter is actually 50 days after Easter. On this day, the Holy Spirit came down, and Church was born. We believe in Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit and have been joined Church. We shall remember this important day. We can not have the salvation, the confidence of salvation, and blessed life as a saved one without the Holy Spirit.

1. New Creation by the Holy Spirit

Today, we're going to learn about "the inner witness of the Holy Spirit," but, let us learn about "regeneration by the Holy Spirit" and "dwelling of the Holy Spirit" before we go to the subject.

In the Bible, the Holy Spirit appeared first in Genesis 1:2, "The

earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” According to this, the Holy Spirit worked for the creation of this world. In Colossians 1:16, “For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things were created through him and for him.” As you can tell from this, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were involved in the creation of the world.

When Jesus talked about the regeneration by the Holy Spirit, he answered, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” He used the words, “water and the Spirit.” This “water and the Spirit” reminds me of the words of the Genesis “the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” When the helicopter stops in the air, we say that, it’s “hovering.” During the creation of the world, the Holy Spirit “was hovering” over the face of the water. People in the ancient time, they imagined the parent bird flying over the baby bird. Like the parent bird takes care the baby bird under their feathers with love, the Holy Spirit created this world.

In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit was hovering over the water when Jesus was baptized. In Matthew 3:16, “And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him;” John the Baptist testified when he saw that. In John 1:32-34, “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on

whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.”

The Holy Spirit regenerates believers with His power of creation like He created the world from the water. Moreover, the Holy Spirit testifies that you are a child of God when you are baptized and confess, “Jesus is the Son of God,” as He testified that Jesus was the Son of God. The “water” in the phrase, “born from water and the Spirit,” implies the water of baptism, and this is a sign of “new creation” as well as forgiveness of sins. John the Baptist gave “baptism of the water,” however, Christ gives those who believe in Him “baptism of the Holy Spirit.” Christians receive the baptism of the new creation and the Holy Spirit Himself.

2. Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

“Indwelling of the Holy Spirit” means the Holy Spirit is living in us. In the Old Testament age, the Spirit was also working, but there was no “indwelling.” This is the new concept and the grace of the New Testament.

In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit “dwelt” in some people (Numbers 27:18, Daniel 4:8), but it was very limited. Also, in 1 Samuel 16:13, there is a description; “Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward.” The Spirit of God “rushed upon” Saul, too, but when Saul went away from God, the Spirit of God also went away, as it was phrased in 1 Samuel 16:14, “Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and a harmful spirit

from the LORD tormented him.” In the Old Testament, the work of the Holy Spirit was kind of “temporary,” and it was not staying with the believers.

In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit could be said, “a visitor,” and He “rushed upon” somebody, sometimes. On the other hand, in the New Testament, the Spirit was like “a resident” of the believers and stayed with them never ever leaving. Some prophecies in Isaiah 44:3, Ezekiel 39:29, and Joel 2-28:29 testified the Holy Spirit would be going to be the residents of us, and it was achieved on the day of Pentecost. So, Peter spoke out to the people wondering what is going on, looking at the remarkable, different movement of the Spirit. He made a citation from Joel 2:28-29, saying, “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit” and proclaimed that the prophecy had been fulfilled.

In the Old Testament, the Spirit only dwells in the Savior as it was written in Isaiah 11:2 and 61:1. So, John the Baptist saw the Holy Spirit in Jesus and testified He was the Savior. The Holy Spirit, Who was staying in Christ, dwells in those who believe the Christ.

Romans 8:9-11 also teaches us about the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, saying, “You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead

dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.”

Here, the Holy Spirit was called both the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ. This shows our God is Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. “Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.” Since Christians are the people who belong to Christ, nobody can become Christian without the Holy Spirit. When someone say that he is a Christian but neither knowing nor having the Spirit, it is as same as being Christian without professing Christ as his personal Savior. Absolutely he is not yet truly Christian, the one belonging to Christ. All of the true Christians have the Holy Spirit, and His dwelling in them.

When we say, “We have the Spirit,” or “The Spirit dwells in us,” it is bold description. Human beings are nothing before the God, but He is actually inside of us. In fact, God holds us and we should be dwelling in God; but He let us hold Him in our hands of faith, and let Him dwell in us.

God said in Leviticus 26:12, “And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.” It was actually to say, “You shall be my people.” But, He also said, “I will be your God.” Jesus also said in Revelation 3:20, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.” Here it is also enough to be “eat with him,” but Jesus repeated that “he with me.” This suggests that the fellowship between God and people are not one way; but it goes both ways. We are dwelling in God, and God is dwelling in us. God have the Spirit dwell in people, so that we could have the close,

interactive fellowship with God.

We are in Christ, and Christ is in us. This “Christ in us” is the essential truth as it stated in Colossians 1:27, “To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Yes, “Christ in us” is the mystery. We have to know this mystery through the Holy Spirit, and seek to live this mystery in our daily life.

3. Inner Witness of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit gives the believers born-again as the children of God and dwells in them. And, He speaks them, saying, “You are the children of God.” This work of the Holy Spirit are called as “inner testimony of the Holy Spirit.”

Romans says about the testimony of the Holy Spirit in chapter 8, verse 14, and the followings. Let me read verse 14 and 15. “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons.” The Holy Spirit gives us freedom. He frees those who were enslaved by sins and death and give them free access to God.

The verse says, “By whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’” This shows the freedom like a picture. “Abba” is an Aramaic word, and means “father.” “Abba” is also a cry of babies calling their father. Since babies has not grown enough to talk well, then they just cry to their father, saying, “Abba!” Imagine that a baby is crawling to his/her father, uttering, “Abba, Abba!” We could not become adults in Christ instantly after we have become a child of God. We are growing to be a

person who look like children of God step by step in time. We are in the process of becoming the adults in Christ. Even we were in the stage of babies in Christ, we can have confidence that we are the children of God through the testimony of the Holy Spirit, and we can go close to God, crying, “Abba, Father!”

However, sometime, we might lose the testimony of the Holy Spirit in various situations. One of them is that we go away from the word of God. The testimony of the Holy Spirit is never separated from the word of God. The Holy Spirit give his testimony by making us remember and understand the word which we have already listen and stored in our mind. The Holy Spirit speaks to us when we read the Bible with peaceful mind, and study it with other Christians, and listen to the word in the worship service. We cannot listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit without the word of God.

We also lose the testimony of the Holy Spirit when we listen to the voice of our own desire instead the voice of the Holy Spirit. The Bible warns us, saying “Do not quench the Spirit.” (1 Thessalonians 5:19) This means that we don’t listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit and resist His guidance. We often don;t recognize that we have quenched the Holy Spirit for many months or years. When we start to go to our goal, if we take a step slightly different from the right direction, we will go far from the goal while we are going far. One of the meanings of “sin” is “off the mark” in the Biblical vocabulary. Sin distances us away from God while we may not recognize it. The Holy Spirit does not always to talk to us gently. He speak loudly when we go away from God, saying, “Do not go there!” Don’t seek only for sweet words. Repent as soon as your sins are shown. If we do so, we can get

back the testimony of the Holy Spirit.

The testimony of the Holy Spirit is more than the voices from our circumstance. It can be heard not only when we are comfortable circumstances, but also we are in troubles and sufferings. In the middle of troubles, we may be able to listen the testimony of the Holy Spirit, and it will save us from worrying about things. As verse 16 says, “The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.” It is the strong confidence that comes from the Holy Spirit Himself beyond human understanding.

“The Lord’s Prayer” begins the cry of “Abba, Father.” We say, “Father – our – Who art in Heaven” in original language. The first word of the prayer is “Father.” When Paul wrote, “we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’” he might have been thinking about the Lord’s Prayer that was prayed at the worship service. The Lord’s Prayer becomes the Prayer of Trust when it was prayed by Christians who have the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit and confidence, saying, “Father!” with the Holy Spirit. Whenever we pray the Lord’s Prayer, let have stronger confidence that we are the children of God, by the testimony of the Holy Spirit.

(Prayer)

Father, You gave us born-again as Your children by the Holy Spirit, and made the Holy Spirit dwell in us. We can know, feel, and affirm You. Give us more the testimony of the Holy Spirit, and make us the witnesses to the people for You. We pray this in the name of Lord Jesus, Amen.