

# Witness of the Spirit - Part 1

by Paris Reidhead

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*Paris Reidhead explores the profound role of the Holy Spirit in confirming the believer's relationship with God and the process of salvation.*

**Duration:** 28:28

**Scripture:** Job 32:8, John 3:16, John 3:24, Romans 8:16, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 4:4-6, Ephesians 2:1, 1 Peter 1:23, 1 John 4:13, 1 John 5:10

**Topics:** "Witness Of The Spirit", "Assurance of Salvation"

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## Description

Paris Reidhead emphasizes the significance of the witness of the Spirit in confirming one's relationship with God, drawing from John 3, 4, and 5 to illustrate how the Spirit assures believers of their eternal life. He stresses that true assurance comes from the Holy Spirit's testimony within us, rather than from external affirmations or mere profession of faith. Reidhead recounts personal experiences and historical insights, particularly from John Wesley, to highlight the importance of understanding the inner workings of the Spirit in awakening, convicting, and regenerating the human spirit. He encourages believers to guide those uncertain of their faith to seek the Spirit's confirmation through God's Word. Ultimately, the sermon underscores that only the Holy Spirit has the authority to affirm one's status as a child of God.

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## Transcript

John chapter 3, this will be number 7 in our series, Seventh Evidence of Eternal Life. I shall give you, who may not have them, one through six. I'm sure there are many people here in the congregation that will be pleased to do that.

If you'll ask them, please put a 7 next to the 24th verse of the 3rd chapter, and next to the 13th verse of the 4th chapter, and next to the 10th verse of the 5th chapter. There are three verses that really are essentially the same, and we want you to note them because they do complement each other and fulfill the statement. In chapter 3, verse 24, the second half of the verse was read for us, and hereby we know that he abideth in us by the Spirit which he hath given us.

And in chapter 4, verse 13, hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And verse 10 of the 5th chapter, he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness within himself. I trust you will understand how we are to use these evidences of eternal life.

The person who comes to us and says, I'm not sure of my relationship with Christ, instead of giving them some glib or light answer, we take them to the Word of God and ask the Spirit of God to show them what is in their hearts. At the very best, we stand at the outside, we see what their lives may be, the little we can observe them, and we hear what they say. But God looks on the heart, and therefore, we want you to take them to the Word.

I mentioned early in the week in this series that on the 4th of July Sunday in 1937, at Lesley Presbyterian Church at the head of Lake Osakis, between Osakis, Minnesota and Long Prairie, Minnesota, I was candidating as pastor of this little country Presbyterian church. My text, of course, being the first time I'd ever been in that situation, had to be John 3.16. And I will never forget when I was sitting down here in the front pew, and Mrs. Peterson was the chairman, and she got up and she said, well, you heard him, do you want him? And Mrs. Hughes said, well, it wasn't much of a sermon, but I liked the way he prayed. I guess he's all right.

I say we get him. So Mrs. Peterson said, well, I guess raise your hands if you want him, and I'm sitting right there, you know. Well, she said, I guess that's most of the hands, and nobody said no, so you'll be with us this summer.

Well, we called him, now what are we going to pay him? And where's he going to stay? He said, you got, Mrs. Hughes, you got a extra room there. Did he stay at your place? Well, Albert, it'd be all right with you. Yeah, it'd be all right with me.

So Albert agreed, and Laura and Albert took me on for the summer. They said, well, now what are we going to pay him? How much are you going to charge him, Laura? Well, I don't know. What do you say, Albert? Well, let them tell us.

So they said, well, how about five dollars a week for board and room? That wasn't too bad, was it? And he said, well, we're going to, and they said, I guess we'll give him 15 dollars a week. That'll take care of his car, and so on. And Laura, you'll get it when we give it to him.

He won't owe it to you if he doesn't get it from us. All right? Well, that was how this young fellow, 18 years old, became pastor of the Lesley Presbyterian Church. And I had about the same kind of a library.

I had a Schofield reference Bible, Cruden's Concordance, and two volumes of John Wesley sermons. There were a total of 146 sermons in the two volumes. You might think that was a pretty meager library, but I'll tell you, anybody who starts out preaching that has John Wesley's two volumes of sermons has a rich heritage to begin with.

And I want you to know that that summer, I got acquainted with that man of God, and he blessed my heart. I've never been without those volumes. They've been a tremendous blessing to me.

And even though I was rigidly schooled in trying to explain away the word of God, Wesley, 250 years earlier--no, it was 200 years then, that was 50 years ago--200 years that time, had an enormous impact on my heart and on my life. And I thank God for the rare privilege that I had throughout the weeks of that summer of visiting with that man through this record of his ministry. And one of the truths that was driven home to my heart, as over and over again John Wesley emphasized it in the sermons that he preached throughout England, was the witness of the Spirit to the new birth.

Now, the foundation truth for this that's engaging us today is found in Job--you don't need to turn--Job the 32nd chapter and the 8th verse, where we are told that there is a Spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding. There is a Spirit in man. And elsewhere we are told the part of a man that knows the things of a man is the Spirit of man that is in him.

If you know you're here and not home or somewhere else, the part of you that knows that is your spirit. Or you could say your soul or your body, but they all enter into it, but still it's the human spirit that knows the things of a man. And it is important for us to understand that one day we're going to leave our bodies.

We've just heard of a sister who is with the Lord. The part of her that thinks and feels and wills is in his presence. And one day they're going to lean over me or over you, and I trust with tears and with regret they will say, he's gone, she's gone.

What do you mean he's gone, she's gone? There's the familiar body with the scars and the evidences of weakness, there it is. And yet the person is gone. The person who thinks and feels and wills and knows, that's the spirit of man that is in him.

Now this statement is the foundation of our relationship with God. We are born of his spirit, by his spirit, and it's our spirits that are regenerated. The day after you were born again, your body was as it had been the day before.

One day in the future, we're going to receive a body like unto his own body of glory. But until that time, the part of us that is made in his image and likeness, the part of us that's the partaker of the divine nature, is the human spirit. Now in the word we are told in Romans chapter 8 verse 16, the spirit itself, but that's because of the reference of pronouns, the spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.

And in that great, I consider it the greatest Christmas passage in the epistles, Galatians chapter 4 verses 4 to 6, we are told that in the fullness of time, God sent forth his son, made of a woman, made under the law to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And since we are sons, God has sent forth the spirit of his son into our hearts, whereby we cry, Abba Father. He has sent forth the spirit of his son into our hearts, whereby we cry, Abba Father.

He gave himself for us that he might redeem us, redeem them that were under the law, and that we might be born into his family and be adopted as his children. And so God sends forth, we are told, the spirit of his son into our hearts, crying, Abba Father. Look at it this way.

We talked to you last time when I was with you about the work of the spirit of God and bringing one out of death into life. When God wants to bring someone dead in their trespasses and sins to himself, the first thing he does is put a sample of his grace up next to that sinner. Did you know, I hope you do, that to someone you are the very best Christian that they know? And perhaps if they ever come to Christ, it will be because they knew you.

You're a sample of God's grace, living Christ before them. That's the first thing you can do for the unconverted. The second thing you can do is intercede for them.

To intercede is to legally represent the sinner before God. To be as a court-appointed lawyer, going into the presence of the judge on behalf of his client who's in prison or in jail, so you are a heaven-appointed representative of the sinner. To go into the presence of God the Father to represent the sinner before

God, to acknowledge his guilt, to accept the justice of God's condemnation, and then to cry out to God for mercy.

God gives that sinner the right to go to hell, and he doesn't interfere until either the sinner or the sinner's representative asks him to. But because you are kinsmen of the sinner, your intercession, in a sense, releases God to begin to work in the heart of that one dead in their sins. So we can intercede for sinners.

And then the third thing we can do is to witness to sinners. Give them the word of God and apply it to their hearts and to their consciences. Now when we do that, then there are some things that God does.

The first thing he does is to awaken the sinner. Awakening is that work of God the Holy Ghost, the spirit of bondage, again the fear, who shows the sinner the basis of his bondage and the grounds of his fear, and causes him to become sensitive to his problem and to his need. It is a very gracious work of God, awakening the sinner.

You can't do it. I can't do it. I can fuss with them and argue with them and jostle them and bump them and make life miserable for them, but I can't awaken them.

That God does. And he does it, I believe, in answer to intercessory prayer. And then the next thing that the spirit of God does, as the word is applied, is to convict the sinner.

To convict is to cause the sinner to discover that he is indeed guilty, he has turned to his own way, that he is a traitor and an anarchist and a transgressor and an enemy and deserves God's wrath. Conviction, a state of mind wherein the sinner begins to agree with God about what God has said concerning him. And when he, the spirit of truth, has come, he will convict.

You can't, you can apply the word, you can't convict the sinner. And on the basis of the sinner having been awakened and having been convicted, then we can enforce the truths having to do with repentance. That now God commanded all men everywhere to repent.

And our Lord saying, except you repent, you'll perish. We can explain repentance, that it's a change of intention and purpose from pleasing oneself to pleasing God. On the basis then of repentance, and only then, the spirit of God releases saving faith into that repentant sinner's heart, wherein he can reach 2,000 years into the past and embrace the Son of God on Calvary, dying for him that he might bring him to God.

And it's more than an exercise of the intellect, it's heart faith that savingly reaches out to the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, look at it this way. The spirit of God brooding over the sinner, as we read in Genesis 1, the spirit of God brooded over the face of the deep, which was without form and void, dead.

And the first thing that God said in Genesis 1 was, like me. And the first thing God does when he would awaken the sinner, when he would deal with the sinner, bring him to grace, is like me. It's the awakening work.

And then as he continues to move, bringing that one to conviction and to repentance, and then to exercise saving faith. And when the spirit of God, who's brooding the while over that sinner's heart, responds to saving faith, it is to join himself to the human spirit. And the person is said to be born of God, pardoned, yes, forgiven, yes, but also made a partaker of divine life.

He's born again. Now when that happens, what part of him is affected? The human spirit. And if it's God, the Holy Ghost, that is bringing life to the human spirit, is it to be wondered, therefore, that the first thing that the spirit of God would do would be to cause this quickened, awakened, forgiven, regenerated human spirit to be able to say, Abba, Father.

Doesn't seem strange or difficult, does it? Doesn't to me. It seems terribly logical, perfectly clear, that if it's God, the Holy Ghost, awakening, convicting, bringing to repentance, quickening faith, that saving kind, and regenerating, the first thing he's going to do is what we read, send forth the spirit of his Son into our hearts, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The witness of the spirit.

Now it's so terribly important for us to understand, therefore, that the only one really in the universe that has the right to tell a person that they've been brought out of death into life is God the Holy Spirit. We can tell sinners how holy God is. We can tell them how sinful they are.

We can tell them what this holy God did in love, sending his Son, and his Son did in love, dying the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God. We can tell them what they must do. We can tell them what will happen when they do what they must do.

But because we stand on the outside, because we aren't in their hearts, they can tell us they've done it before they've done it. Therefore, we have to say to that person, now look, this is what God did, and this is what you must do, and when you do what you must do, this is what God will do, and when God does what you must have done, you will know, and when you know, you tell me. Don't you see what happens with that? Oh, maybe it's a bit slower.

Maybe we don't have quite as many decisions. But when a person knows from God they've been born of God, we're going to do something with that statistic that says we have to have 200 conversions to get one person going on a year later living effectively and faithfully for Christ. Sometimes when you want to read John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, you'll discover that he writes that three times during a seven-year period he had people come to him to talk with him about being born of God.

And three times he made professions of faith, and three times he discovered that nothing had happened. And when he discovered nothing had happened, there was disillusionment and depression that sank in and he went back into the world. Until finally, the Spirit of God worked in his heart, and no man was there.

They'd been there before, led him to premature profession, and then God revealed to him that he'd been brought out of death into life. And it was because of that experience that he felt that he had to do something that was going to enable him to save others from the experience through which he had passed. And for that reason, he wrote *Pilgrim's Progress*, that he might endeavor to establish certain of these principles.

Someone very dear and very near to me made an indication of a need when I was pastor in New York City. I knew I'd been praying for this particular person. I'd been very burdened, one knowing that he demanded reality.

And I was rather surprised when this person raised a hand at the end of the service, and then I did as I frequently did, said, if you'd like to talk or pray with us, please go into the Wilson Chapel, the little room to the side of the auditorium there at the tabernacle. I was delayed. Some people came to talk to me and I couldn't leave them.

I wanted to get in there. And when I got into that room, my associate, a good man who basically understood and would agree with what I've just said to you, had gone to this person and had done as he'd been taught to do years and years before, had taken this one through the scripture, elicited a positive response, put words into the person's mouth, had them pray, and then said, now tell Pastor Redead what's happened. And the person looked and said, what do you mean? Well, what? And so he had to say, well, does that you're saying? Oh.

And so the person repeated what he'd been instructed to repeat. I was, didn't know what to do. I didn't know how to handle it.

Because, you see, the person was my son. And three months later, no, actually a year and three months later, that son told me, Dad, you know, that night, nothing happened. I can't go on fooling you any longer.

I don't know that there's a God. I don't know that God is. I don't know anything.

I only know I tried it twice and it doesn't work. Nothing happened. And I, I just have to tell you that I'm not what, I can't go on deceiving you.

My wife and I have been praying ever since that God would reveal himself, make clear to him, bring him out of, to a real assurance and knowledge. Well, you say you're prejudiced because it was your son. No, I'm prejudiced because I'm, I'm, I'm concerned about the word of God.

Because I believe that God, the Holy Ghost, never abdicated as the spirit of adoption. And the only one in the universe that has the right to tell a person they're brought out of death into life is God, the Holy Ghost. No one else.

I can tell them how holy he is. I repeat, I can tell them how sinful they are. I can tell them what God did.

I can tell them what they must do. I can tell them what God will do when they do what they must do. But I have to stand outside.

They have to tell me when it's done. Now, I find here that this is not new. The message that God gave John Wesley when he went back to England, where everyone in the country were Christians, their own names were all on the church rolls, they'd all been baptized.

Oh, said John Wesley, how imperative it is for us not to deceive ourselves in this most important of all questions. How many vain men have rested the scripture to the great loss of their souls? How many have mistaken the voice of their own imagination for the witness of the spirit of God, and thence idly presumed they were the children of God while they were doing the works of the devil? All endeavors to bring them into the knowledge of themselves, they will then account fighting against God. And with vehemence and impetuous spirit, they call contending for the faith.

They set themselves so far above all the usual methods of conviction that we may well say that it is impossible. It's hard to find words, said Wesley, to explain what the children of God experience. But perhaps one might say the testimony of the Holy Spirit is an inward impression on the human spirit whereby God directly witnesses to my spirit that I am a child of God, that Jesus Christ has loved me and has given himself for me, that my sins are blotted out, and I am reconciled to God.

Now, what was he saying? He was saying that it's good to have all of these various things that have made any contribution in the religious life of the individual, but that the only one in the universe that has the right to tell us that our sins are forgiven, that we're pardoned, that we're born into God's family, is God the Holy Ghost. The believer, the Spirit of God gives a believer such a testimony of his adoption that he can no more doubt the reality of his sonship, that he can doubt the shining of the sun while he stands in the full blaze of its warmth and of its beams.

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