

WHAT'S IN A BREATH?: The Breath of The Holy Spiritⁱ John 20:22; Galatians 5:16-25

INTRODUCTION:

Good morning, Trinity! It is good to see you here today. If you are a guest with us, we want to say a very special welcome to you. I'd love the opportunity to get to know you more. You can connect with us by texting the keyword, TBCMP, which stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mount Pleasant, to the number 94-000. When you send that keyword, a link will be sent back to you and that will take you to a short form. When you submit that form, it notifies me and I look forward to following up with you.

Or feel free to swing by our information center located in the fellowship area. There we have a gift we would love to put in your hands and a way of saying thank you for being our guest today. We are thrilled you have chosen to worship with us today.

SERIES OVERVIEW:

I want to invite you to take your bibles and turn with me to two places this morning. John 20 and Galatians 5. We are going to begin in John 20 and then move quickly to Galatians 5.

We are in a teaching series we've called, "What's in a Breath." We are taking a look at some of the places in the Bible where it is said that God breathes and the significance of God's breath. We've looked at the breath of life, the breath of God's Word, and the last breath of Jesus. Today we are going to look at the breath of The Holy Spirit.

ILLUSTRATION: DMZⁱⁱ

This coming Friday is Veteran's Day. That is a day that we set aside in our country to recognize and honor those who have served our country. I'm curious as to how many veterans we have with us today. If you have served in our armed forces, would you just stand for a moment and allow us to recognize you? Thank you for your service to our country.

My Dad was drafted into the Army during the Vietnam War. And by God's grace, he did not have to serve in Vietnam, but was sent to Korea. He served between North and South Korea, on a stretch of land 160 miles long by 2.5 miles wide (400 square miles, roughly the size of Titus County). This stretch of

land is arguably the most dangerous area in the world. What is ironically called the Demilitarized Zone, or the DMZ, is filled with 2.2 million land mines. As you can imagine, navigating an area with that small with that many land mines is extremely challenging.

Well, we too, navigate many land mines. We are engaged in a spiritual battle against light and darkness. But the good news is that we have been equipped and empowered with the best possible tool to navigate the spiritual landscape in which we find ourselves. As believers in Jesus, we have been given The Holy Spirit that leads us and protects us from land mines.

However, we must learn to listen to The Holy Spirit in our lives so as to avoid what is there to trip us up. When we attempt to navigate on our own, we are susceptible to falling prey to the enemy.

I want us today, in our study, to learn how to navigate our spiritual landscape. It is my goal for us to learn about the Breath of the Holy Spirit but to also learn how to allow Him to guide us.

MESSAGE:

Read along with me in your copy of God's Word. Let's begin in John 20, verse 22. Before we read this verse, allow me to set the stage for us.

In John, chapter 20, Jesus has been crucified and resurrected. He appeared to Mary Magdalene on Easter Sunday. After that, Mary runs and tells the other disciples what she had witnessed. The disciples were in the upper room and Jesus walks through the door. And when I say through the door, I mean, quite literally, through the locked door. He shows them His wounds and then tells them He is sending them out to be His witnesses. This is where pick up the story. Verse 22 of John chapter 20. ***22And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."***

In this verse, and in the Galatians passage we will come to, we see 4 principles to being led by The Holy Spirit. First, let's look at...

1) The Reception.

Here in John 20:22, Jesus breathes on the disciples. Now, I know the title of this message is the Breath of The Holy Spirit, but here it is obviously Jesus that is doing the breathing. Well, in the Bible, The Holy Spirit **IS** the breath of God.

So, while Jesus breathes here, He is God, and therefore the breath He breathes is highly symbolic of what is to come, The Holy Spirit.

While the disciples were in the upper room, they were still awaiting what Jesus promised them back in chapters 14 and 16. Remember, Jesus said that it is good for Him to go so that The Helper, The Holy Spirit, would come.

What we have in John, chapter 20, is a unique period of time between the Old Covenant and the fully working out of the New Covenant. It is a tension known as the already, not yet. This tension is presented multiple times and in multiple ways throughout the New Testament. For example, we live in the already, not yet. As believers in Jesus Christ, we have eternal life. The moment we are saved, the moment we bow the knee to Jesus, we gain eternal life, yet we have not entered into what will be the New Heaven and New Earth in the end time. The already, not yet principle.

So, the disciples see the resurrected Jesus, here. Jesus has already paid the price for their sin. They have obviously, by faith, trusted in Jesus for salvation. But they have yet to have received The Holy Spirit. The already, not yet.

The Holy Spirit would descend days later at Pentecost. That's Acts chapter 2. Jesus said that The Spirit would not come until He ascends and that's exactly what happened. Let's look at it as we consider the reception of The Holy Spirit. Acts 2:33. Peter said, ***“33Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.”*** This is when the believers first received the indwelling of The Holy Spirit.

Now, in John 20, when Jesus breathed on them, that was not Pentecost, you understand. It was, instead, a powerful object lesson. Just as God breathed life into Adam with the breath of life, and just like the valley of dry bones would be revived by the breath of God, and just as Jesus breathes in this moment, the Holy Spirit, often referred to as God's Breath, would fall upon the disciples at Pentecost, in the coming days. And there would be the reception of The Holy Spirit. And since Pentecost, since Acts chapter 2, every Christian, yielding their life to Christ, receives the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation.ⁱⁱⁱ

Now, this reception is key. If we are to live victoriously in Christ, we must have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God. Listen, it is impossible to navigate the

spiritual land mines we face on a daily basis without the power of The Holy Spirit. We, in and of ourselves, do not have the power nor the ability to do that apart from being led by the Holy Spirit of God.

So, we see the vital necessity of the reception of The Holy Spirit. Secondly, ...

2) The Rule.

Flip over to Galatians chapter 5 and read with me the rule, the command, the call by which we are to operate. Verse 16. ***“16But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.”*** The command, the rule, the urging, is to not just receive The Spirit, but to walk by the Spirit.

A couple of words here that are vitally important in understanding the rule. First, “walk.” What is unique about that word, “walk,” for you fellow grammar nerds in the room, is that it is a present, active, imperative.^{iv}

Imperative meaning that it is a command. In other words, this is not a good idea or a suggestion, or opinion, or a proposition. It is a command to be obeyed. As believers in Jesus Christ, we must walk by the Spirit.

It being present and active means that it is a command that is expected to be followed not once, but as an ongoing state. See, the life in Christ, lived in The Holy Spirit, is a continuous, regular, habitual way of life.^v

ILLUSTRATION: Doctor's Advice

Consider this like going to the doctor. When the doctor tells me, “Your cholesterol is too high, Chris, eat less fatty foods.” Let me tell you what that doesn't mean. It doesn't mean that on just my next meal I should eat less fatty foods. No! It means that from now on, eat better. It is to be a regular, habitual way of life.

Now, the word, “walk,” is also second person plural. So, what Paul is saying in plain East Texan is, “Ya'll better keep on walking by the Spirit.” This is the rule, the command.

The second word that is important, in this verse, is the term, “Spirit.” Now, I don't know if this is the case in your translation, but in my translation, that word is capitalized. That means that The Spirit is not a mystical force, it is a specific person. What Paul is getting at is that the Spirit is not a feeling, nor

atmosphere, nor a rah, rah, team spirit. It is The Holy Spirit of God. We are to walk according to The Holy Spirit. We are called to a life of holiness, beloved. Since we have the indwelling of the Spirit, He becomes our guide to living a life of holiness. As a believer, possessing the Holy Spirit, we have the ability to be led by Him.

Now, please understand, I'm not saying that we are try, on our own, to walk the right path. No, Paul says we are to allow The Holy Spirit to be our Guide. The Spirit, and The Spirit alone, is able to produce works of righteousness in you.^{vi} That doesn't come from you and me, you understand. It is a result of The Holy Spirit at work in and through you.

So then, the question becomes, "Why would it be imperative, then, that we walk by the Spirit?" Well, that brings us to point number 3. We have the reception of the Spirit and we have the rule to follow, now we learn about, ...

3) The Rivalry.

I mentioned in our opening illustration this morning that we are engaged in a battle. Land mines are everywhere. That is the result of the rivalry between God and Satan, spiritual warfare. And listen, let me just tell you, if you think that you are not engaged in spiritual battle, friend, I'm telling you, you are deceived. We are engaged in a great spiritual war.

Look at verse 17 of Galatians 5. ***17For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.*** You see the rivalry between the two.

ILLUSTRATION: College Football Rivalries

You know, what makes college football so much better than the NFL, well there are many things, but the main reason are all the classic rivalries. Texas and OU. Arkansas and LSU. Florida and Florida State. What's awesome about those games are the trophies. The Golden Hat for Texas / OU. Texas crushed OU this year. Sorry sooner fans. The Golden Boot for Arkansas / LSU. The Florida cup for Florida / Florida State. Just classic rivalries.

Well, there is no greater conflict than that which battles for our souls. The rivalry between The Spirit and our sinful flesh. Paul said it best in Romans 7. He says in verse 15, ***15For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do***

what I want, but I do the very thing I hate." Again, in verse 21 he says, ***21So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.***" Can you relate to this conflict? I know I can.

The reason why it is important for us to receive the Holy Spirit and to walk by the Spirit is because of the conflict in which we all face. Again, land mines everywhere. The battle between our flesh and The Spirit.

Paul gives us specifics about this battle. The word translated as "flesh" is a word that means human nature. It is not a reference to skin and bones, the physical flesh of humanity. But rather, it refers to our human nature and the predisposition we have toward sinfulness.^{vii} Paul says that part of us stands against, opposed, to the work of the Holy Spirit. Our flesh resists The Spirit. And the purpose of the Spirit's presence in our lives is to war against the flesh so that we do not do what we want to do. The Spirit works in a way to put a halt to what our flesh says that it wants to do. And that's a good thing.

ILLUSTRATION: Dad of Daughters

Listen, I'm a dad of two beautiful girls. And I coach varsity boys basketball. If I did what I wanted to do, listen, I know because I've been there. If I did what I wanted to do, there would be no hairy legged boys. Zero. Or I'd be in jail; one of the two. Dads of daughters, can I get an Amen?! Having The Spirit battle against our sinful tendencies is a good thing. Conviction of the Holy Spirit is a great and wonderful thing!

And Paul says that the works of the flesh and the works of the Spirit are obvious. Look at verses 19-24. ***19Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality*** [these are carnal struggles of the flesh, not godly. These things run rampant in our culture today. He goes on], ***20idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions,*** [these are relational struggles] ***21envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before,*** [double warning] ***that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.***

And just like the works of the flesh are obvious, the works of the Spirit are obvious, too. Verse 22. ***22But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh*** [put to death the flesh] ***with its passions and desires.*** We could spend an

entire series of sermons on each of these fruits of the Spirit. But for today, I just want us to see the drastic difference between the Spirit and the flesh. The intense rivalry.

So, we've talked about the reception of The Holy Spirit, The Rule to follow The Spirit, the Rivalry our flesh has with The Spirit. The fourth and final principle we see is...

4) The Responsibility.

While we are to rely on The Spirit to lead and guide us, there is a responsibility that we have. Look at verse 25. *²⁵If we live by the Spirit, let us also **keep in step with the Spirit.***

The Bible teaches us that The Holy Spirit plays a significant role in our sanctification. That is a big word that means the process of becoming more like Jesus. The indwelling of The Holy Spirit in us is to make us more like Christ. That's the goal. 2 Corinthians 3:18 says, *¹⁸And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are **being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*** We are being transformed into the image of Christ. As a result, we are to be willing participants in the sanctification process. We battle spiritually each and every day to allow The Holy Spirit to do His work in and through us. We do this by keeping in step with The Spirit.

So, the question is, "How do you know if you are in step with The Spirit?" Well, we're in step with the Spirit when we allow our character to model Jesus' character. Paul just mentioned the fruit of the Spirit. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

You can tell that you are acting on your responsibility to cooperate with The Spirit if you are progressively becoming more loving, more joyful, peaceful, patient, kind and good, more faithful, and more self-controlled.

I heard one pastor say, "When we are keeping in step with the Spirit, we may regularly find ourselves choosing to do things that we probably wouldn't do ordinarily."^{viii} Things like choosing to give more time to something holy, or more money to someone in need, or we might reach out and care for others. We will certainly have more of a hunger for God's Word and for worshipping Him.

Here's the good news. We don't have to do any of this on our own. The Holy Spirit does those things in and through us. Our only responsibility is to allow The Holy Spirit to do His work. It is The Holy Spirit's job to transform us to be more like Christ.

ILLUSTRATION: Flying on an Airplane

If I can illustrate this for us, I would use the analogy of an airplane. When we fly to some destination, it's not our job to fly us there. It is the pilot's job to get us there. Our only responsibility is to show up on time and board the plane. Getting to our destination is not our responsibility.

The same is true spiritually speaking. It is the Holy Spirit's job to get us to our destination, which is being like Jesus. Our responsibility is to keep in step with Him. He does all the rest.

CONCLUSION:

As we come to the end of our service this morning, I want to ask you a couple questions. Have you received The Holy Spirit? This isn't something mystical. It is something that is automatic when you trust in Jesus. Ephesians 1:13 says, *¹³In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him [In Jesus], [at that moment you] **were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.***

The answer to the question if you have received The Holy Spirit rests in what you have done with the person and work of Jesus Christ. Have you trusted Jesus as your Lord and Savior? And that trust is way more than just a head acknowledgement. It's a heart surrender. It is a giving of ourselves to Him. Have you received The Holy Spirit?

If not, today can be the day that you do. We will have elders here at the front this morning and we would love nothing more than to visit with you about what it means to trust Jesus as Lord. Or if you have questions about what that means. That's what we are here for.

The second question I have for you today is, "Are you keeping in step with The Spirit?" Can you see evidence of The Holy Spirit making you more like Jesus? Is there something that you need to surrender? Something that The Holy Spirit is convicting you about? Give it to Him today. [PRAY]

ENDNOTES:

- ⁱ Works consulted in preparation of this message: John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: John 12-21*, Moody Press: Chicago, 2008; John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Galatians*, Moody Press: Chicago, 1987; Scot McKnight, *The NIV Application Commentary: Galatians*, Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1995; Vivian Bricker, "Why Is the Breath of God Significant?," article published by Christianity.com, January 27, 2022, accessed online: <https://www.christianity.com/wiki/holy-spirit/why-is-the-breath-of-god-significant.html>; Chip Ingram, "Are You in Step with the Holy Spirit?" article published by Living on the Edge with Chip Ingram, published July 12, 2017, accessed online: <https://livingontheedge.org/2014/07/12/are-you-in-step-with-the-holy-spirit/>; Michael Youssef, "Got Freedom Part 8," sermon published by Leading The Way with Dr. Michael Youssef, accessed online: <https://www.ltw.org/listen/teaching/series/got-freedom/part-8>; John Constantine, "Being Led Like Jesus Parts 1-4" article published by Hand In Hand Ministries, 2020, accessed online: <https://vimeo.com/420465389>; John Piper, "The Risen Christ – He Peace, Power, and Purpose," message posted April 7, 2012, Desiring God Ministries, accessed online: <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/the-risen-christ-his-peace-power-and-purpose>; Bible Ref, "What Does Galatians 5:16 Mean?," article posted by BibleRef, commentary accessed online: <https://www.bibleref.com/Galatians/5/Galatians-5-16.html>; Jason Mills, "Why Can't We Walk Straight?," taught 2019, Calvary Church Albuquerque, accessed online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yfYreaqBaVA>.
- ⁱⁱ I heard this illustration from Jeremy Randolph, Director of Missions, Harmony-Pittsburg Baptist Association.
- ⁱⁱⁱ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: John 12-21*, Moody Press: Chicago, 2008, page 382.
- ^{iv} Pointed out by Bible Hub's Interlinear Bible on Galatians 5:16, accessed online: <https://biblehub.com/interlinear/galatians/5-16.htm>.
- ^v John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Galatians*, Moody Press: Chicago, 1987, page 152.
- ^{vi} Ibid.
- ^{vii} Thayer's Greek Lexicon, Strong's NT 4561: $\sigma\alpha\rho\varsigma$
- ^{viii} Chip Ingram, "Are You in Step with the Holy Spirit?" article published by Living on the Edge with Chip Ingram, published July 12, 2017, accessed online: <https://livingontheedge.org/2014/07/12/are-you-in-step-with-the-holy-spirit/>.