

DIVINE THUMBPRINT

3rd in a series on Ephesians called, “Messages to the Misfits”
Passage: Ephesians 1:13-14

Every Christmas I catch at least some of the classic movie *A Christmas Story*. That movie definitely strikes a chord for me when it depicts the fevered imagination of childhood. In the movie the central character, eight-year-old Ralphie Parker, is obsessed with getting a Red Ryder BB gun for Christmas. Prior to Christmas though he is anxiously awaiting the arrival of an Orphan Annie decoder ring that will allow him to decode important messages from Andre. In his mind he is anticipating receiving messages that will enable him to do serious work in the spy world. Finally the ring arrives, Ralphie decodes the message, and is disappointed to read, “Be sure to eat your Ovaltine.” So much for the spy world. But then it’s back to the BB gun. This is not just a toy, it is going to make him heroic. He imagines himself protecting his family from the marauding band of bad guys led by the evil Black Bart. Ralphie does get his BB gun, and he’s thrilled, but in the end it is just a toy and it doesn’t change his life or make him heroic. It did what it was supposed to do, but it didn’t match his imagination.

Today in our study of Ephesians we are going to encounter the Holy Spirit. When we think about the Holy Spirit there is something of a parallel with Ralphie. People have expectations and imagination of what the Holy Spirit will do. But sometimes they are as far from reality as Ralphie’s dreams of fending off Black Bart with Old Blue, his trusty BB gun. His BB gun did what it was supposed to do, not what he dreamed. When it comes to the Holy Spirit we need to match our expectations with what God says he is supposed to do. God is real, and the Holy Spirit is doing real things in this world and in our lives. But we need to make sure we know what that actually is. Let’s look at Ephesians 1:13-14 where God tells us some things we should expect from the Holy Spirit.

THERE IS CONFUSION ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT

When I was young and my parents took us to church, I don’t remember hearing a lot about the Holy Spirit. But I do recall hearing about the Holy Ghost, because everybody used the King James Bible back then, and that’s the term it used to refer to the Holy Spirit. I remember thinking, “Holy Ghost! All right! Now things are getting interesting. We’re going to talk about ghosts.” Church often was kind of boring, but ghosts are definitely not boring.

This Ghost was a Holy Ghost. That certainly was not going to be as intriguing as a scary ghost or a spooky one, but still, it was a ghost. And I liked Caspar, who was a friendly ghost. So maybe I would like this Holy Ghost too. I would learn that in the 16th century when the King James Bible was translated the English word ghost meant much the same thing as the word spirit means today. Later it took on the connotation of the haunting spirit of a dead person, and that had nothing to do with the Holy Ghost. So the term Holy Spirit, while less titillating to young boys, is a more appropriate term.

Unfortunately there is a lot of teaching about the Holy Spirit today that is so murky or downright wrong that we might as well be talking about a relative of Caspar. In many cases the Holy Spirit is badly misrepresented with unfortunate results. Because of distorted understanding of the Holy Spirit and his work there are a lot of Christians who feel like they are second class at best, or they are mightily striving to gain something they feel they lack, or they are seriously deluded and living with a lot of pretense. I know of some who have even concluded there must be something wrong with them because they don't have what other people claim to have in their spiritual experience.

A lot of the problems people have because of confusion about the Holy Spirit happen because we don't pay attention to what God has said about him and his work. We will look at the Holy Spirit a couple of times in the book of Ephesians, but today we will look carefully at two things the Spirit will do in us. This is not an exhaustive explanation of all of the Spirit does. But in these verses we see two specific things the Holy Spirit does in our lives.

Remember that Paul wrote to encourage some Christians who were having trouble breaking away from their culture, a culture that was seriously at odds with a godly lifestyle. The Christians in some cases were falling back into old destructive habit patterns. Paul wrote to help them understand how they should live and how to do that. One big element of what they had in Christ is the Holy Spirit. To understand his work let's look back and get a bigger picture from the Scriptures.

Exodus 31:2-3 the Lord says to Moses, "See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills." The Spirit made Bezalel able to do the task God had given him to accomplish.

In 1 Samuel 16:13 the great priest Samuel shocked everyone by anointing young David to be the next king of Israel. Then, the verse says, "From that day on the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David." Again the Spirit empowered and enabled him to lead Israel as king. In his Psalm of confession after David had horribly compromised his convictions and sinned David prayed in Psalm 51:11, "Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me." David knew what an incredible blessing it was to have the Spirit of God in him and he did not want to lose it.

Almighty God has an ability that we don't possess and don't fully comprehend. He has the ability to put his Spirit inside people. How is that possible? I don't know, but he can do it in his mysterious and divine way. What if human beings had the ability to put their spirit in another person. One thing I wish I could do is be a successful novelist. What if David Baldacci or James Patterson could put their spirit in me so I could write like them? How cool would that be? It wouldn't be nearly as cool as the God of all creation putting his Spirit in me. God's people in Old Testament times knew that would be one of the best things that could ever happen to them. In those days that was a benefit that a very small number of humans were given, but it was something that anyone would want.

Then we come to Ezekiel 36. In that chapter the prophet foretold a time when God would do an amazing thing and restore Israel, which had consistently disobeyed God and ultimately suffered judgment as a result. They had become a pitiful travesty of what God's people were supposed to be. But God was not done with them. He would eventually restore them to the faith and the position that they should have had. In verse 25 the prophet quotes God saying, "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols." So that's amazing good news. But it gets better in verses 26-27. "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws." God promised when he did this new thing he would put his Spirit in his people. It wouldn't be just a few who would get that gift like it was in the Old Testament. All of them would get his Spirit.

In Acts 2 when that promise finally began to be fulfilled and the Spirit was poured into the lives of the first followers of Jesus, the crowds in Jerusalem saw evidence of this amazing event. After they heard Peter explain what was going on they asked, "What must we do?" In other words, how do we get that? They asked that at least in part because they wanted it. They knew that having the Spirit of God inside would be an incredible blessing. It was something they wanted a lot.

In Acts 2:38 when the crowd asked Peter what they needed to do to also receive the Holy Spirit he answered, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." That day 3000 people responded and received that gift. What did Peter tell them to do? Repent. Watch out for that word. People typically think it means change all your ways, clean up your act, become a much better person. Stop doing what you used to do, all those bad things. But that's not what Peter meant. The Greek word for repent was *metanoia*. It is a compound word. The first part, *meta*, in this case meant "again." The root idea of the second part, *noia*, was to think. Thus it literally meant, "think again." So it means, change your mind.

I was a weird kid. I'm still weird as an adult, but I've gotten a little better. One example of my weirdness as a youth was I was sure I didn't like pizza. The big reward for various things in school was a pizza party, which wasn't an award for me because I wanted no part of pizza. I don't know why I thought I didn't like pizza. I have no recollection of eating it and hating the taste. Somewhere early on I just decided I didn't like it and it wasn't because I didn't like the taste. Somehow just the idea of it bothered me. I don't know why. Maybe I didn't like how it looked. But I was rock solid in my anti pizza conviction. I avoided it religiously. What teenager doesn't like pizza? Me. I was that weird kid. But one evening when I was still in high school my brother was home from college. He and his college roommate were going to go out to a pizza place and they invited me to come with them. I can even remember that the pizza parlor was Shakey's, not exactly the finest, most authentic pizza on the planet. This, of course, was an offer I couldn't refuse. Hanging out with my college big brother and his buddy was light years beyond merely cool. But this presented me with a dilemma. It would not be cool if I went with them but didn't eat pizza because I didn't like it as though I was some finicky little kid. I had no choice. I was going to just have to choke down some of that offensive stuff acting like I loved it as much as they did. When you're a teenager the choice

between being uncool on one hand, or eating something awful but being cool on the other, was a slam dunk choice. Cool and acceptance always wins. The pizza came and to me it looked very unappetizing. But as the two college guys were eagerly diving in, I gritted my teeth, picked up a piece and bit into it. And in that moment I repented. I thought, “This stuff is terrific. Where has this been all my life?” I changed my mind about pizza, and that was repentance.

Those people in Jerusalem had rejected Jesus. They didn’t believe he was the Son of God. They thought he was a heretic or a rabble-rouser. Peter told them they needed to think again, to change their minds, believe Jesus was Messiah and be baptized in his name to have their sins forgiven. If they did that, they would receive the Holy Spirit just as Ezekiel had promised. So let’s bring this into our lives. Have you changed your mind about Jesus? Have you decided he is the Son of God and have you put your faith in him, being baptized in his name to be forgiven of your sins? If you have, then if what Peter said was true you have received the gift of the Holy Spirit. According to Peter you get the Holy Spirit by believing in Jesus. Either that’s true or Peter was wrong.

That’s where many believers start to squirm. When the Holy Spirit was placed in a group of people for the first time it was dramatic and miraculous. So many assume if the Holy Spirit comes inside us it will also be dramatic and miraculous. Thinking this, many Christians strive to sort of produce something they can think of as miraculous as evidence that they truly have received the Spirit. This leads to a lot of phony supposedly divine activity. It causes some to feel like there’s something wrong with them. A lot of us just end up thinking, “This just doesn’t seem real. If the Spirit were truly in me it would be dramatic. I would feel different. I’d certainly be...more powerful, godlier, than I am.” People today tend to forget that when thousands received the Holy Spirit after Peter preached miracles are mentioned. They believed, were given the Spirit and followed Jesus.

I suspect if you asked most Christians if they believed the Holy Spirit was in them and was working in their lives they might say they believe it on an intellectual level, but they don’t really feel it and are a bit disappointed because they hoped for more. So what do these verses say we should expect?

THE HOLY SPIRIT PROVIDES TWO SPECIFIC THINGS

The Holy Spirit Is A Seal

We see in verse 13 a message similar to Peter’s in Acts 2:38. “You were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.” You believed and were marked with the Holy Spirit, just as Peter said would happen.

What was promised? God said through Ezekiel when he instituted a new covenant he would put his Spirit in his people. According to Paul that happens when you hear the message of the gospel of salvation and you believe. At that point you are marked in Christ with a seal, and that seal is the Holy Spirit.

But I didn't feel the Holy Spirit come into my life. Really? Well how does it feel when the Holy Spirit enters? I don't know, but surely it would feel like something. And I would feel different with him there. All right. How would you feel? I don't know. Here's the problem with that. I understand your concern, but the Bible doesn't say anything about what you feel when the Holy Spirit enters or is present in your life. It says the Holy Spirit will do a number of things, but none of them have much if anything to do with feelings and emotions. That doesn't mean feelings or emotions are wrong. They just aren't promised and don't have much to do with the Holy Spirit.

Last year Toby graduated medical school and for the first time was Toby Myatt M.D. Getting done with medical school was a big relief. That was a long, arduous ordeal. And graduation was a truly joyful event. But not long after the ceremony, I asked Toby how it felt now that he was a doctor. He said, "It doesn't feel any different." He felt like he was the same person he was before. But he wasn't the same. He was now a doctor, regardless of how he felt. When he started working at the hospital, he said it was kind of strange to have people looking at him expecting him to know how to treat very sick people. In one conversation he said to me, "I just hope I don't kill anybody."

If you are a believer in Jesus, you have the Holy Spirit inside you and you have him as a seal whether you feel like it or not. It is objectively true. God keeps his promises, and he promised that would happen.

What does it mean for the Spirit to be a seal? The primary significance of a seal in the time that Paul wrote was that it was a mark of authenticity. If a king or ruling authority issued a decree how would people know it was for real? I suspect they had fake news back then, too. It's not hard to imagine how some scam artist might try to con people with some official looking document that issued a fake decree he could use to part them from their money. So authorities had protection against that. They had a ring that was the symbol of their position. On an official document they would put some hot wax, then they would impress their ring in the wax. You could see the imprint of the ring on the wax. That wax was a seal. It guaranteed that this document was the real thing.

Last year Laurie and I co-signed a loan for Toby and Anna so that they could buy a house up in San Clemente. One day we had to go to an office up in that area with the two of them and we all had to sign papers that would make it official that the bank would loan them an absurd amount of money. To make it official they had to kill a whole forest worth of trees in order to make enough paper to accommodate all the documents we had to sign. At least it seemed like that because we had to sign reams of documents. There was a notary there to verify that it was indeed us signing those papers. As part of that we had to sign the notary book and put an ink thumbprint next to our signatures. That thumbprint is unique to each of us. No one else on the planet has my thumbprint, so it verifies beyond question that the people signing those papers were who they claimed to be. It was the proof that the signatures were authentic.

The Holy Spirit is God's thumbprint on his people. He verifies that this person is the real deal, that he or she is, in fact, a child of God, a member of his eternal kingdom, a follower of Jesus. The Holy

Spirit acts as God's divine thumbprint in two ways. The first is **objective**. He verifies objectively that this person is a child of God.

So, people who have the seal of the Holy Spirit are noticeably, objectively holier, better than other people and everyone can see it? Not exactly, but there is an objective evidence of that seal that can be observed. In John 16:8-9 (New American Standard Version) Jesus said of the Holy Spirit, "When he comes he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; concerning sin because they do not believe in me." The word translated "convict" means to convince. So the Holy Spirit will convince people that not believing in Jesus is sin and they needed to change their minds, or repent. In other words, the fact that you believe in Jesus is evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit. If he were not there convincing you, you would not believe.

You see the same idea in John 3:5-6 Jesus told Nicodemus, "No one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit." The fact that we believe in Jesus is obvious, overt evidence that the Holy Spirit is at work in us. If he were not, we would not believe. It is that simple.

In 1 Corinthians 2:14 Paul wrote, "The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit." So there are things about the gospel that you are only going to understand and accept if the Spirit is in you enabling you to do so. Without him at work in you the whole thing will seem rather ludicrous to you.

Let me give you a few examples. Do you believe that God is a triune being, that he has 3 persons but is 1 being? If you do, how do you explain that, and why would you believe it? I can't explain it, in fact, it cannot be explained in any human terms. I don't fully understand it and I don't really know why I would believe it, I just know that I do. Try to convince someone who does not have the Holy Spirit in them about the trinity and you will soon find out that it requires a work of the Spirit to believe it. Do you believe that God became a man and had to be born and live as a human infant? How is that possible? I don't know, but I believe it, and am quite confident of it. That's because the Holy Spirit is at work. There is no other reason, and without him you would not believe. Do you believe that Jesus actually died and physically came back to life, never to die again? If you believe these things it is only because the Spirit makes you able to do so.

Sometimes I get a little down on myself because I haven't worked out enough. I am pretty diligent about exercising. I consistently exercise at some level 5 or 6 days a week. But I could do better. I could work out harder. When I go to the Under Armour store and see those mannequins that have huge muscles that stretch those shirts tight, I think, "I should have worked out harder. I should be like that, and I'm not close." But then I have the experience of going to the doctor and they take my vitals. On a recent visit the nurse said, "Good job. You obviously are keeping yourself in good shape." That is objective evidence that I have been consistent in exercising. Yes, I could be better, but the work has clearly been there.

The fact that you believe is objective evidence of the Spirit's presence. It is the seal of the Spirit. Here's another element of that. Imagine that you did not believe the gospel and the Holy Spirit was

not in you. Would you be any different than you are now? I venture to say you'd be very different. Just one small indication is you wouldn't be here in church today. That is the seal of the Spirit, the evidence of his presence and work in you.

Please recall what Ezekiel said the Holy Spirit would do. In Ezekiel 36:27 he said, "I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws." What will the Spirit do? Lots of Christians want to say he will do amazing miracles, he will make you feel his presence and have a continuing spiritual high. But what does God say? He will make you want to do what God says! That is the big thing he will do, give you a heart soft to God, one that beats to do God's will.

Does that mean you will always do his will perfectly? No. I can point you to an incident in Peter's life where, though he had the Spirit he messed up. But it means there will be in you a desire to do God's will. You won't be indifferent toward it or rebellious, and when you fail you feel that failure and want better. Just ask this: do most of the people you know who don't believe in Jesus, thus don't have the Spirit, care very much about what God's will is? Do they change their actions, priorities, speech to be more like Jesus? Do they spend time reading God's Word to remind themselves of what God wants us to be and do? No, they don't even think about that. But you do. Why is that? Because the Holy Spirit is in you.

Remember what Ezekiel says. You will want to obey God because the Spirit is in you. You won't just try to live by the Law because you have to do that to somehow measure up and try to get God to accept you. With the Spirit you know you are accepted, so now you try to obey God because it's what you want to do most of all.

But there is also a **subjective** aspect of the seal of the Spirit. Romans 8:15-17 says, "The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."

I know people who are at least as good as me, or even better. Some of them are not believers in Jesus. I am painfully aware of the gap between what God wants me to be and what I am. I see lots of holes in my walk with God. Satan, who is called the accuser of the brothers and sisters, jumps all over those. I hear those accusations. "You are so phony. You are so weak. You claim God loves you and is at work in you. How could he ever love you? What a joke you are." But in my lowest moments, in those times when I'm feeling my most unworthy, I can't get away from the sense that God is there, and that I am still his child. I feel unworthy, I know I am unworthy, but somehow I still feel like there's an open door for me to pray. Why is that? It is because the Holy Spirit gives me a spirit of being a child of God. That's the seal of the Spirit.

Part of that subjective seal of the Spirit is his work in leading us. We have those times when it's almost like we can audibly hear his voice. We feel him prompting us to do something. Sometimes we think it's our own conscience, but there are times where we have a real sense that this has come from somewhere else. The Spirit is prodding us.

I recall one unusual incident that became clear the Spirit was at work. Laurie and I were in New Orleans several years ago. As we were touring the French Quarter, we noticed a few people begging. I didn't want to have to deal with them. I know, very compassionate, Rick. Like I said, I see the gaps. But there was one guy we encountered on a side street and we couldn't avoid him. There was no one else on the street, so we were the obvious targets for him. I wanted to just blow him off. But I had that prompting. You should do something for this guy. I didn't want to, but that prodding wouldn't stop, so I said, "Fine. I guess I will do something for him." I didn't want to pull my wallet out because I've been robbed before because I trusted people, and I could envision him snatching my wallet and running off with it. I didn't have much cash anyway, but I didn't want him to have my credit card and driver's license. So I figured I'd give him what I had in my pocket. I just wanted the voice in my head to leave me alone and I hoped that would be enough. When the guy approached us he said a weird thing. He gave me the typical sad story then said, "Would you be able to give me 73 cents?" That's a pretty random number and a small one. I've never in my life had a panhandler ask me for 73 cents. I said, "Uh, I'll give you what I have in my pocket. I don't know how much it is." I pulled the money out of my pocket. Let's see, 2 quarters, 2 dimes and 3 pennies. It was exactly 73 cents! I was stunned. I gave it to him. He probably went away thinking, "I should have asked him for \$2." But for me it was a reminder. It was like the Spirit said, "Good job, Rick. It wasn't much, but you did what I asked you to do. Just wanted to remind you I'm here."

The Holy Spirit is A Down Payment

There is something else the Spirit does for us. Verse 14 says he is a "deposit guaranteeing our inheritance." Hmm, a deposit that guarantees what is to come later. What does that sound like to you? Doesn't it sound like a down payment?

The Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament (p. 523) says that the Greek word used here, arrabon, means, "Down payment, pledge." It goes on to say, "The down payment is of the same kind as the full payment." That makes sense. Both Michael and Carissa and Toby and Anna have bought houses in the past couple of years. Both of them had to agree to make a down payment. The down payment in both cases was thousands of dollars. They were the pledge that they would repay the money that had been loaned to them to buy their mansions. It was the first part of the repayment, thus was made of the same stuff. In short, dollars.

Paul tells us that the Holy Spirit is God's down payment. He is the pledge, the guarantee, that God will fulfill his promise to give us an eternal inheritance. So the first thing is that his presence in our lives gives us confidence about our eternal future.

But he is a taste of that future. In his commentary on Ephesians theologian E. K. Simpson wrote, "the life that (the Spirit) implants in the saved soul partakes of the quality of that of heaven." The great scholar J. B. Lightfoot wrote, "the spiritual life of the Christian is the same in kind as his future glorified life."

You all know that I love Laurie's apple pie. Her apple pie is what all other apple pies aspire to be. It has ruined every other apple pie on the planet for me. People love Julian apple pies. I usually won't

bother to eat them because they are so disappointing compared to Laurie's. When she bakes an apple pie almost always a couple of things happen. One is the house is filled with a delicious aroma. The other is she almost always has some scraps of dough that she uses for the crust left over. She lets me eat a scrap or two. Those scraps and that heavenly aroma is an arrabon, a down payment, a guarantee and small taste of what is to come. As good as they are, they aren't the full on pie. They just speak of the pie and whet my appetite for the real thing.

That's what the Holy Spirit is. He and the life he produces in us is that brief taste that gives us an inkling of what is to come and how terrific it is. There is a connection between the life the Spirit produces in us and the life we will have in heaven.

You might say, "Uh, that's actually kind of disappointing. I was hoping that heaven would be a whole lot better than what I'm experiencing right now." Let me remind you of a couple of things. First, life in the Spirit is just an appetizer. It is the aroma that makes you eager for the full on meal. Just as the pie is way better than the taste of a scrap of crust, so life in God's kingdom will be way better than anything we experience in this fallen world.

But second, let's remember what that life in the Spirit is like. You all know that Laurie and I love Hawaii. Everyone has scenery and climates that they love. I know the Turners love the wintry scenes and weather. But for us, temperatures in the 80's with lows in the 70's is heavenly. We both are really sensitive to cold and love the warm. It is easy for us to lose sight of how good we have it here at times, especially last month when it was frigid! But a couple of years ago we went up to the Seattle area when Laurie's mom died shortly after Christmas. We stayed up there for several days to help with the funeral. That time of year in Seattle is typically cold and wet. But that year, the locals claimed, it was unusually cold. For us, it was painfully cold. At the end of our stay we flew home. We got back on a January evening around 8 PM, so it was quite cool. But when we got out of the airport to walk to our car we both said, "Man, is it nice to be home." The air felt downright pleasant to us. We have a tendency to forget how mild and pleasant the air and the climate is in San Diego.

We kind of do the same thing with the life of the Spirit. If we live in the Spirit, we will be totally at peace with God. We will live connected to him, knowing we are his beloved children. Our lives will be full of purpose, because the Spirit infuses everything we do with meaning. We will be at peace with ourselves, because we know that we are forgiven and loved, and we know the immense worth we have. We will not be consumed with the need to prove our value nor to try to make other people happy or like us. We will be at peace because God is with us and is directing every day of our lives. We have hope no matter what is going on in our circumstances, we have the certainty of eternal life, and we don't need to fear anything. If you will look around you will see that people are desperate to have the very things that we have in Christ.

APPLICATION

DON'T DOUBT THE SEAL

Too often Christians stress about whether they are truly a part of God's kingdom. We cause ourselves unnecessary pain. Remember the seal of the Spirit. You believe, you know God is there, you want to do his will. Even if you are far from perfect in your execution the desire is there, and that is evidence of the Holy Spirit's work. You experience his promptings from time to time.

You have been sealed with the Spirit. So rejoice and give thanks for what God has done in your life. Rejoice, and don't feel like you have to go looking for some experience someone claims to have had. Don't fret about miracles or feelings, but live in the truth.

LIVE IN THE DOWN PAYMENT

Don't forget what you have. Remind yourself of the life that you have been given. You are forgiven, loved, accepted by God. He is with you. He is directing your life. He has given you eternal purpose. You have an eternal inheritance. Nothing can ever take that from you. You've been given the down payment, and it is certain you will some day live in God's kingdom of peace and joy forever.

The Spirit of Christ is in you. He is there and he is quite real. He is working to make you more like Jesus, to produce in you a life that is like that of Jesus. Thank God that he has given you the Holy Spirit. Ask him to make you more and more like Jesus. Ask him to more and more produce in you his fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness and the rest.

Live in his presence, follow his promptings, and trust what he decides to do in your life. Let him choose what he does in you and be at peace with whatever that may be. Rest in his work and his presence. Remember he will never leave you, no matter what happens. You will not be perfect, but you can still have a heart for God, and that's what the Spirit is all about.

I had one of those dumb moments yesterday. I had been looking at an interesting story on my phone. Laurie was talking to me and I was sort of listening, but not really. Then I had a thought, I told her there was something we should do that I had just thought of. She looked at me with a funny expression and said, "Rick, I just said we should do that." Oops. She knew I wasn't listening to her. I felt bad. I messed up and it was obvious. But as dumb as that was, the fact is I still have a heart for Laurie. It grieves me when I mess up like that. And I want to do better. I want to do what brings her joy. And that's how it is with the Lord. We mess up, but the Spirit still gives us a heart for God.

As you walk in the Spirit, living by the grace of Jesus Christ, you will be at peace. You will have joy. You will be changed. More and more love will become who you are, as you exude gentleness, kindness and goodness to others.

PRAISE HIS GLORY

All that God has done for you is so that you can live to the praise of his glory. That doesn't mean you go around verbally praising God every moment. But it does mean that your motive in everything you do is to draw attention not to yourself, but to his glory.