

**Introduction:** Here are two of many truths about God: He is a giver; and, He desires for people to grow closer to Him, giving up all distractions. We can only grow closer to God when we know by experience His strong life-changing LOVE. \*\*\* Think of positive relationships in your life. (I hope everyone has one or more.) Parents and children: As parents give much time to their children and share themselves with them, in words and by example, a strong bond of love develops. The love comes from shared experiences in their relationship. The same is true of best friends. In friendship, the life-enhancing experience of love may be stronger because this relationship is chosen by everyone. \*\*\* In all relationships, giving is the best way to build strong love. The bond in human love built by giving comes from The LOVE God gives to all people, especially those who receive it. \*\*\* This is Pentecost Sunday, the Sunday seven weeks after Resurrection Sunday. Counting Easter, it is the fiftieth day, hence its name ('fifty' in Greek). On the first Pentecost Sunday The Father and Jesus poured out The Holy Spirit on one hundred twenty disciples of Jesus who were in the midst of a ten day prayer meeting. When Jesus came to earth as a human baby boy He became, literally, God with us. But now, something better happened. ALL disciples of Jesus can now experience God IN us – always! This is the greatest gift ever. \*\*\* As Peter would later write, the gift of The Holy Spirit was spoken through the prophets starting seven centuries before God gave this gift (*2 Peter 1:19-21*). After Yahweh put His Spirit on seventy Israelite elders in the wilderness, Joshua was jealous for Moses; but, Moses said, would that all Yahweh's people were prophets, that He would give The Spirit to His people (*Numbers 11:14-25*). Later, Yahweh told His prophets He would give His Spirit to His people (*Isaiah 44:1-5; Joel 2:28-29*). \*\*\* Our passage this morning may be the best because The Covenant God, through Ezekiel ('strengthened of God'), tells why He graciously gave His Spirit to His people: so they would walk with Him in His ways. \*\*\* Let's now look deeper.

**I. The Lord will restore and cleanse His people, giving them His Spirit to walk in His ways; they will be in close relationship with Him and given much food. (Verses 24-30)**

- A. The Lord will gather His people to their land, cleanse them from idolatry, give them a new heart and spirit; and give them His Spirit to walk in His regulations and keep His justice. (Verses 24-27)
1. And I have taken you from the nations, and I have gathered you from all the earth and I have brought you into your land. (Verse 24)  
**Resettled:** Ezekiel began to prophesy at the beginning of the first Babylonian captivity (*chapter 1*). Part of his call was to offer hope to God's people after seventy years of discipline (*Jeremiah 29:10*).  
**Prophetic past tense:** In much of prophecy, God speaks as if the future has already happened!
  2. I have sprinkled on you clean water, and you have been cleansed from all your uncleanness; and, from all your idols, I will cleanse you. (Verse 25)  
**Filthy idolatry:** Most of us are ignorant of our idols and how they make us filthy in God's eyes. Anything that we love more than God, even for just one hour, is an idol.  
**Future cleansing:** Here, God inspires Ezekiel to tell His people that in the future He will cleanse them from their idols, removing their filth.
  3. And I have given you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you; and, I have removed the heart of stone from your flesh and I have given you a heart of flesh. (Verse 26)  
**Newness:** The Covenant God giving a new heart, soft as human flesh, after He removes the 'hard-as-stone' heart from the body, happened under the Mosaic covenant. It was, and is, His gift of Grace.  
**Distant future:** The new spirit, replacing the dead spirit all people have at birth, is future to Ezekiel, and fully given at Pentecost (*Acts 2*).
  4. And My Spirit I will give in you; and, I have done that in My decrees you will walk, and My justice, you will guard and you have done. (Verse 27)  
**God IN us:** The Covenant God gives an awesome word of promise to His people. His Spirit will be IN them. Having done this (past tense future), they will walk in the decrees for right living He gave them through Moses; and, they will guard His justice so ALL people are protected. Equity. In essence, God says only people who have His Holy Spirit IN them can live by all the instruction for life He gave through Moses. And, only they will walk in close covenant relationship with Him.

**Having The Holy Spirit is the only way to walk with God**

- B. They will live in the land He gave them to be intimate with Him, He will save them from their uncleanness, and give them much food to not take famine in the nations. (Verses 28-30)
1. You have dwelt in the land which I gave your fathers, and you have been My people and I will be your God. (Verse 28)  
**Covenant intimacy:** Their covenant intimacy was broken by their idolatry, so they have lost the benefits of their relationship with God, but, He gives His Word He will restore the intimate relationship He desires. (*Leviticus 26:12; Jeremiah 7:23 | Hebrews 8:10; Zechariah 13:9; 2 Corinthians 6:16-18*)
  2. I have saved you from all your uncleanness, and I have called grain and made it abundant, and I will not give famine upon you; and I have made abundant the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field that you will never take again the evil of famine among the nations. (Verses 29-30)  
**Salvation:** This is full salvation of body, soul and spirit into a right covenant relationship with God. It is now available to all in Jesus: The Savior.  
**Food:** When they have been cleansed by God they will have an abundance of grain and fruit!  
**NOT famine:** When they are restored to a close relationship with God, by having His Spirit IN them, they will never again be disciplined by famine before the nations. Instead, God's people will be the witness to the nations He created them to be.

**Having The Holy Spirit is the only way to walk with God**

## II. They remembered their evil ways, loathe themselves, knowing God's gifts are not earned; The Lord says He will cleanse them and the land become a garden so the nations know He did it. (Verses 31-36)

A. God's people remember their evil ways and abominations and loathe themselves, they are to know His gifts are not for their sake, and they must be ashamed and confused. (Verses 31-32)

1. You have remembered your evil ways and not good deeds, and been made to loathe yourselves for your iniquities and abominations. (Verse 31)

**Remember:** The exile has caused God's people to remember their evil ways and that they are not good.

**Detest own abominations:** As they remember, they detest their twisted desires that have led them to do abominable deeds before their Covenant God.

2. The Lord Covenant God says, you will be made to know I am not doing this on account of you, be ashamed and confused from your ways. (Verse 32)

**NOT for you:** Human pride makes all of us think we deserve something from God. No one is all bad. But, the truth is everything any person has is a gift from God, unearned and undeserved.

**This will be known:** When they are made to know the new heart and God's Spirit are gracious gifts, they will remember their evil idolatry and be ashamed of their abominable deeds.

**Be ashamed:** They will be ashamed and confused when they receive the gift of humility.

B. The Lord says, I will cleanse your iniquities, I will cause cities to be inhabited, the desolate will be like a garden, and the nations will know I did what I said. (Verses 33-36)

1. Thus says The Lord Covenant God, in the day to cleanse you from all your iniquities. (Verse 33a)

**Thus says The Lord:** When their master, The Covenant God, speaks in this way, they must listen.

**To cleanse ALL iniquity:** A day is coming when He will cleanse them of all iniquity. This is the day they will get a new spirit as a result of being given His Spirit. There are two synonyms for iniquity. Put mildly, it is to be twisted; put bluntly, it is perversion. What a promise to be cleansed of sin and iniquity by God's gift of a new spirit.

*God promises to give a new spirit to cleanse from sin*

2. I have made the cities to be inhabited and the waste places have been rebuilt. (Verse 33b)

**Cities:** All cities will be re-inhabited, especially Jerusalem ('teaching of peace').

3. The land being made desolate shall be worked where it had been desolate in the eyes of all passing by; and, they have said, this land being desolated has become like the garden of Eden. (Verses 34-35a)

**Being desolated:** To make the point, God inspired Ezekiel to use the verb for desolate four times and the noun once. When they receive the gift of God's Spirit they must never forget the desolation was the result of acting on their own, apart from God.

**Cultivated:** Land is worked when it is cultivated. God gave this task to the first people. (Genesis 2:15)

**Eden:** Just in case His people did not catch this allusion, God inspired Ezekiel to mention Eden!

4. The waste cities, being desolated and ruined are being fortified and have been inhabited. (Verse 35b)

**Fortified:** God is putting a 'fence' around the now vacant cities so His people will be protected by Him when he brings them back after seventy years of captivity.

**Inhabited:** The future habitation by God's people is so certain He expresses it in the past tense.

**God's Spirit:** Again, this will all happen because of God's gift of His Spirit to His people. Then they will be able to walk (live) in obedience to all His covenant stipulations and enjoy Him.

*Having The Holy Spirit is the only way to walk with God*

5. The nations which will be left round about you have known ... (Verse 36a)

**Nations know:** When people of the nations who do not know the experience of God's Grace and strong LOVE transforming their twisted and confused lives so they have a new spirit from God's Spirit being given to them, see what God has done for His now Spirit-filled people, they will take notice. This anticipates Jesus' last command for His disciples to make disciples of all people, teaching them to obey all He has commanded (Matthew 28:18-20).

6. ... that I, The Covenant God, have rebuilt the ruined places and replanted being desolated. (Verse 35b)

**Final reversal:** Not only does God make sinful people new, He also rebuilds and replants!

7. I, Yahweh, have spoken and I have done it. (Verse 36c)

**Spoken and done:** What Yahweh (The Covenant God) says He is certain to do. He gives His people His Spirit, fulfilled at Pentecost, so they can walk in all His ways as given from Moses to Malachi.

**Homiletical Idea:** *Having The Holy Spirit is the only way to walk with God.* (#4)

**Conclusion:** The Covenant God will restore and cleanse His people, giving them His Spirit to walk in His ways and have a close relationship with Him. But, first, they will remember their evil ways and abominations so they know this gift was not for what they did. Finally, He will restore them to Eden so the nations will know He has spoken and He has done it.

*Having The Holy Spirit is the only way to walk with God*