

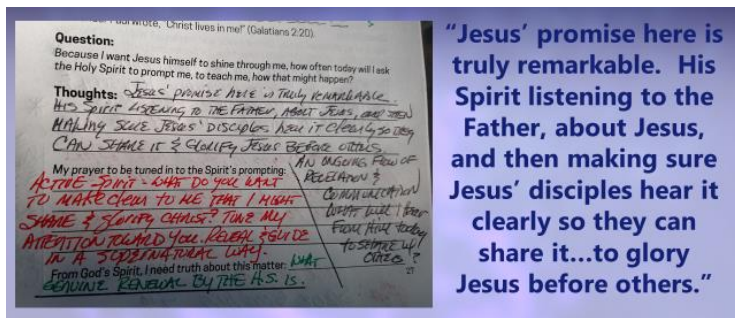
Engage the Spirit's Renewal

Titus 3:5, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

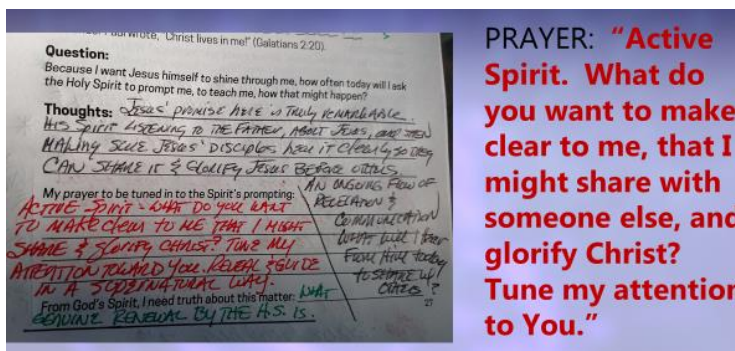
INTRO Welcome back to ENGAGE THE SPIRIT!

If you're new to our fellowship this morning, our worship services are focused this fall on God the Holy Spirit, one of the 3 persons which make up the Triune God, the God of the Bible, the true God.

Many of us are using a 60 day devotional called Engage the Spirit. I am really being helped by this day-by-day focus. Here's another page from my journal this week -- on Wednesday -- from Jesus' teaching in John 16. The THOUGHTS the Spirit gave me:



Here was the PRAYER He prompted me to pray:



Let's ask God for insight into His Word (prayer)

With your permission, I would like to show you something that is truly FANTASTIC. Now the word “fantastic” actually means “dazzling, out of this world...something so incredible it can *take your breath away*.” And, you ask, “Hey pastor, what ‘do ya got this morning that’s so FANTASTIC?”

Well, it has to do with the city of Jerusalem. But to understand the FANTASTIC part, you’ll

have to hang with me for a bit of history over the next 5 minutes.

Jerusalem. History suggests Jerusalem was founded in 4,000 BC – that makes it almost 6,000 years old. But back then, it was perhaps a very small collection of families on a little piece of land. Even 2,000 years before the birth of Jesus, Jerusalem was nothing more than a small village of less than 10 acres, population perhaps 500-700 individuals. The Bible tells us that Abraham pitched his tents near it and it was led by it a “king,” a priest of El Elyon (God Most High) named Melchizedek who received a tithe from and blessed Abram. But back then, Jerusalem wasn’t much more than a few hundred people living on one side of a valley.

A thousand years later, when David was King, Jerusalem was perhaps 35-40 acres. You could fit the whole thing on our church property and had room to spare. Perhaps 2,000 people at best...a few more than live in the town of Gilbert (IA); very small city.

In Jesus’s day, estimates vary widely. Jerusalem had grown, spreading to just over 200 acres. Its Holy Temple and Roman palaces surrounded by a wall with 11 gates. Perhaps 50,000 or more lived there (i.e., the size of Ames), though at festival times, the populace easily could double.

So Jerusalem...from a

- few founding families on a couple of acres
- to 500-700 on perhaps 10 acres
- to 2,000 on 40 acres
- to 50,000 in Jesus’ day on about 200 acres

Today, Jerusalem sprawls over 42 square miles of hills and valleys, blanketing some 27,000 acres, 7 miles long, 6 miles wide. 3.7 million people call it their home, 70% Jewish, 30% Arab. And it truly is a beautiful place...so very different from “the original” Jerusalem.

Now, here’s the fantastic part. Suppose you were to hear from God that it was His promise and plan to create a “renewed” Jerusalem. What would that mean--that God himself was going to “renew” the city He deeply loves. What would you expect to happen?

- Would you think, “Oh, God is going to renew Jerusalem to *its original condition*”?
- That’s often what we mean by *renew*. You find an old car in a junk yard, you find a piece of antique furniture in the back of the family barn --and through a lot of hard work and expense,

you renew that car to its original condition, you make the chest look like it did when it was originally built. You *renew* it.

But that's not what God means when He promises to "renew." Not "restore to the original."

No, God reveals He means something very different by the word "renew." He means, "to create what's never been seen nor experienced before." How do I know? Just look at the FANTASTIC place God will create a NEW JERUSALEMⁱ to be:

<u>Today's Jerusalem</u>	<u>The New Jerusalem</u>
7 miles long, 6 miles wide (42 square miles) (27,000 acres)	1,400 miles long 1,400 miles wide 1,400 miles deep (2,744,000,000 cubic miles) (1,756,160,000,000 acres ⁱⁱ)
3-4 million people	billions and billions of people ⁱⁱⁱ
Light from the sun Temple Mount in the middle In an old, decaying universe	Light from the Being of God ^{iv} Throne of God in the middle ^v In a new, eternal universe

No wonder John the Apostle heard this from the throne, "Behold! I am making all things new."

What is my "fantastic" point? When God uses the word "renew," it has little to do with "restoring to the original." It has everything to do with "creating what has never been nor experienced."

And if you will, take all of that (about what God means when He uses the word "renew") and import it into what the Bible tells us the Holy Spirit has been put inside each of us who believe and follow Jesus Christ to do (turn to Titus 3):

^{Titus 3:3-5} For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, **He saved us**, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, **by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit**

Here's the question, "When God saves a person, what is He out to accomplish? What is God's objective?" Answer: He is passionate about creating a NEW PERSON.

**SALVATION is about REGENERATION,
A RENEWAL accomplished by the Holy Spirit.**

**In my salvation the renewal of the Holy Spirit
creates something new, free, and powerful
of me and through me.**

God creates something like never before, something greater, something only possible through the supernatural hand of the Spirit. This renewal is designed to express the very unmistakable life of Jesus in me, of me, and through me. So, let's understand 4 fantastic truths.

#1 GOD'S PURPOSE IN SALVATION IS the SUPERNATURAL RENEWAL OF HIS CHILDREN—of you!

This explains, of course, why Jesus was so insistent with Nicodemus (cf. John 3).

John 3:3 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again (or, 'from above') he cannot see the kingdom of God." 4 Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" 5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again (from above).'

8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. **So it is with everyone** who is born of the Spirit."

Here, Jesus compares the Holy Spirit to a powerful, rushing wind that comes down from heaven with water/rain to produce life from above. The truth is that God intends that a hurricane happen in your life, in my life. Not a destructive hurricane, but a life-producing one. And the purpose of the Spirit-hurricane is to give you new life and to start creating in you a new, never-experienced-before, greater-than-the original Christ-like person.

#2 THIS RENEWAL RELENTLESSLY REMOVES THE OLD, CREATING THE NEW

2 Corinthians 5: 16-17 From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come (p.966 ESV Bible)

Several years ago, I had the honor of some influence with a young woman – a spiritual daughter of sorts – and we were talking about perspective, exploring the kinds of ways she was thinking about life. At one point in our conversation, I said to her, "Sooner or later, you'll have to start thinking about life like (the Apostle) Paul", and I smiled. Her quick, candid response was, "I can't stand Paul!" and she too, laughed.

Of course, what I meant was the "Paul" whom the Holy Spirit prompted to write this Scripture. Like this verse in 2 Corinthians, where Paul admits, "You know, there was a time in my life when I sized up people by what I could see NOW in their lives. I *measured them* in a fleshly way. I evaluated them from a human perspective. They are what they are by virtue of their lineage, their background, their education, their status – what I can measure up now. [Paul admits] *That's even*

how I once sized-up Jesus – just a no-nothing wanna-be rabbi from Nazareth.”

“Now,” he writes (vs. 16), “I think differently.” Verse 17, Anyone in Christ is a **new creation**.

That means the old has passed away. God the Spirit is creating the new.”

As a teenager growing up in the 1920's, he began boxing in illegal prize fights. When just 15 years of age, he moved to Cleveland OH to train as a professional boxer. For 4 years he got punched around the circuit, until he hung up the gloves in 1933. While in Cleveland, he met Lou Rothkopf, a member of Moe Dalitz's outfit. His boxing career over, Mickey Cohen later moved to New York, where he became an associate of labor racketeer Johnny Dio's brother, Tommy Dioguardi, and with Owney Madden. Finally, Cohen went to Chicago, where he ran a gambling operation for the Chicago Outfit, Al Capone's powerful criminal organization.^{vi} Eventually, he returned to Los Angeles to set up his own criminal enterprise there and in Las Vegas under his own name

Charles Colson offered a fascinating story about gangster Mickey Cohen. One night Cohen attended an evangelistic revival service, and surprisingly, seemed interested. Realizing what a dramatic impact Cohen's conversion could have on the world, many Christian leaders began visiting him. After one long night session, he was urged to open the door and let Christ in, based on Revelation 3:20. Cohen responded.

But as the months passed, people saw no change in his life of crime. When confronted, he responded that no one told him he would have to give up his work or his network of criminal friends. After all, he insisted, there were Christian football players, Christian cowboys, Christian politicians. Why not a Christian gangster?

SALVATION is not only about “opening up the door and inviting Christ in.” That's part of it, to be sure. But a genuine faith-opening of the door understands that God's saving us is more than a guaranteed plane ticket to heaven. When the Spirit **saves**, when the Spirit **washes**, when the Spirit places a believing person “in Christ,” it's about **creating a new person**. A REGENERATING RENEWAL that takes the old away and creates the new.

#3 THIS RENEWAL IS A SUPERNATURAL PROCESS of the Spirit, which brings

Take a moment to look up these Scriptures which round out the renewal of the Spirit.

- **NEWNESS** in serving God Romans 7:6 (p.943 ESV)

Romans 7:6 But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so **that we serve in the new way of the Spirit** and not in the old way of the written code.

- **FREEDOM** and **GLORY** 2 Cor 3:17-18 (p.965 ESV)

2 Cor 3:17-18 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And 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.

- **TRUE GOD-LIKE-NESS** Col. 3:9-10 (p.984 ESV)

Col. 3:9-10 Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, **which is being renewed** in knowledge after the image of its Creator.

Take a moment. Think about what Scripture is picturing. A process of renewal that is marked by “newness” (not just following a list of laws), a “freedom and glory” transformed day by day into an expression of God’s glory. Being renewed after the image of my Creator.

**In my salvation the renewal of the Holy Spirit
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William P. Farley remembers, “I wanted a deeper relationship with God, and I thought Isaiah 66:2 was speaking to me in the words, “This is the one I esteem; He who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at My word.” But I didn’t understand the connect between humility and trembling before God’s word. So I prayed, “Lord, please make this verse real to me.”

Five days later, my wife and I were driving down the Oregon coast. I was meditating on 1 Corinthians 13:12, which says, “Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.” I prayed, “God, please open my eyes to any evil in my heart.”

As we followed Highway 101 I sensed a connection between Isaiah 66:2 and 1 Corinthians 13:12. So I prayed, “God, show me the connection between these verses.

A few minutes later, my wife began talking about a movie she liked. Irritated by the intrusion of such a trivial topic, I belittled her opinion. Instantly, three life-changing words knifed into my consciousness. *There it is!*

“What was that?” I wondered. Then I realized the Spirit had spoken. So I asked, “What is it?” An overwhelming sense of moral ugliness—my arrogance and pride—washed over me. For the first time I saw those sins in God’s light.

My next sensation was the profound conviction that God had loved me for 45 years despite these besetting sins. It was painful to see my pride as God saw it. I went for my sin and I wept because of God’s indescribable love.^{vii}

Out to create something never seen before in me

- God’s purpose in salvation is supernatural renewal
- This renewal relentless removes the old and creates the new
- This renewal is a process of the Spirit that brings newness, freedom & glory, true God-likeness

And...

**#4 THIS RENEWAL FUELS A TENACIOUS
EXPECTANCY of ETERNITY every day**

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (p. So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, **our inner self is being renewed day by day.** For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

Three sisters, ages 92, 94, and 96, lived together. One night, the 96 year old drew a bath. She put one foot in and then paused. “Was I getting in the tub or out?!” she yelled.

The 94 year old hollered back, “I don’t know; I’ll come and see. She started up the stairs but stopped on the first step, shouting, “Was I going up or coming down!?”

The 92 year old was sitting at the kitchen table, having tea, listening to her sisters. She shook her head and said, “I sure hope I never get that forgetful,” and knocked on wood for good measure. Then she yelled, “I’ll come up and help both of you...as soon as I see who’s at the door.”^{viii}

When the Spirit of God is flowing like rivers of living water out of your heart, when He is soaking you like a saturated sponge, when He is empowering you like a hydro-electric dam...when He is renewing you, creating something new--you're not confused about whether you are coming or going. We are GOING!

FINISHING UP

So...I hope – if you didn't have it before – you have it now. An understanding of why God has brought you/me salvation.

**SALVATION is about REGENERATING,
a RENEWAL accomplished by the Holy Spirit.
In my salvation the renewal of the Holy Spirit
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That Christ be formed in us today...more and more...with our eyes on the future. We participate in the process when we take the time to do what William Farley did. Gaze at Scripture. Gaze at the glory of the Lord. Ask the Spirit to speak to us about then next step of creating something new in us...something not seen before...something greater than the original.

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ⁱ Cf. Revelation 21-22

ⁱⁱ There 150 billion stars in just the Milky Way Galaxy. In the new Jerusalem, there are 7 times the acres as there are Milky Way galaxy stars.

ⁱⁱⁱ Jesus: "In my Father's House are many dwelling places. If this were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you" John 14:

^{iv} Cf. Revelation 21:23.

^v Cf. Revelation 22:1

^{vi} https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mickey_Cohen

^{viii} "The Indispensable Virtue," in *Discipleship Journal* (September/October 2001)

^{viii} Shared by Van Morris, Mount Washington, KY, in *1001 Illustrations that Connect*, p.9.