

God Breathed - Part four – Life, love, and power

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BIG IDEA – Jesus breathed on his disciples, and they were never the same.

scripture focus - Romans 8:26-27 NLT “And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don’t know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God’s own will.”

When I started going to church regularly, a huge part of my week was spent with our youth group. These are the friends who shaped me and helped me negotiate the ways of fitting into the church. I was brand new in my faith, but I had almost zero experience in church culture.

One time we were raising money for Missions and our Youth Pastors, Mark and Gwen had come up with a really wild idea. Mark wanted us to do a 24hr rock-a-thon. He convinced a bunch of older adults to let us borrow their rocking chairs, then got permission from the grocery store on the corner of Del Amo and Pioneer to let us setup 30+ rocking chairs circled up in the parking lot. We had to asked people to signup to sponsor us to give a specific dollar amount for every hour we rocked – and Mark made sure we were rocking not sleeping (he allowed for potty breaks).

One of the group games we played was called, “Gospel Ship.” We say, “I’m going on a trip on the gospel ship and I’m taking....” You could name anything you wanted to take, the weirder the better. The catch was, you stayed in the game only as long as you could recite the complete list from the beginning of what you planned on taking. With so many of us playing, it took a very long time to play

this group game. But we had all night long to play it, so it passed the time well.

What made me think of that silly rock-a-thon game of my youth was this idea of taking with me the essentials for the trip.

What do we need, what are the essentials, the absolute necessities of being a follower of Jesus?

What comes to mind?

I wonder how many of think about the having and experiencing the Holy Spirit? This series, God Breathed is focusing on the necessity of the Spirit in our lives.

We talked about the Holy Spirit bringing creation, order, and peace. **Pastor Ben** talked about experiencing God, not just having an intellectual knowledge of Him. Last week, about how God, in the person of the Holy Spirit is the initiator of our praise and prayer.

If you follow the theme of "God Breathed" throughout the Bible, you'll find this consistent thread that God has always used the illustration, the object lesson of breathing on us to remind us that we are more than just flesh-bags, more than just blood and bone. We have been given far more than a physical existence; we have been given an eternal soul that will live forever. Where that soul and body chooses to exist in the future when this world is destroyed and made completely new, well... that is up to you to choose where you want to live.

The Apostle John tells us that Jesus had a very telling conversation with one of the religious leaders, a Pharisee, who became curious about how this whole-body verses spirit works. Jesus told Nicodemus this truth.

John 3:5-8 NLT

“Jesus replied, “I assure you, **no one can enter the Kingdom of God** without being born of water and the Spirit. **Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life.** So don't be surprised when I say, 'You must be born again.' **The wind blows wherever it wants. Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it is going,** so you can't explain how people are born of the Spirit.””

Nicodemus asked Jesus “How are these things possible?” Great question.

Jesus challenged his heart, but also his thinking. Nicodemus was trapped, living in a small religious box. Jesus said, “**You are a respected Jewish teacher, and yet you don't understand these things?**” Jesus eventually gives Nick one of the most famous verses in the New Testament, known and quoted by many. The Bible address seen on poster boards on freeway overpasses and at stadiums around the world. Remember, Jesus is answering **Nick's question, “how is this possible?”**

John 3:16-21 NIV

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.”

Jesus did not come to condemn you, but to save you. Jesus did not come to ruin your life, but to rescue you from YOURSELF!

Jesus' message to the religious and nonreligious is this, we are born human and can do try our best to live a life doing good, but it will only frustrate us and fail. It is only through the Spirit of God that we are reborn through the perfect work of Christ and are free from the judgement of death in our sins. Flesh produces only acts and behaviors of the flesh, but the Spirit in us produces acts and behaviors of God!

Later in John's gospel John writes about this short, but powerful moment after Jesus's death, burial, and resurrection.

John 20:19-23 NLT

“That Sunday evening the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them! “Peace be with you,” he said. As he spoke, he showed them the wounds in his hands and his side. They were filled with joy when they saw the Lord! Again he said, “Peace be with you. **As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.**” **Then he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.** If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.””

This moment captures the theme and thread of God breathed. It reminds us of Genesis 2:7. It even reminds us of one of Ezekiel's visions in Ezekiel 37:5 where God tells Ezekiel to speak to the dry bones and God will breathe on them to come to life!

When God breathes the Holy Spirit on us, it gives us life! When the Spirit blows over us it revives our heart, turning it from stone to flesh, from hate and anger to love and forgiveness.

Lastly, when God breathes the Holy Spirit on us, it gives us the greatest gift and ability to not just connect with God in a moment of desperation, but to walk with Him, in every moment of every breath we take.

The Apostle Paul does an extraordinary job explaining this to the churches in Rome. In chapter 8, Paul details what the life in the Spirit

looks and its effectiveness in our lives. He comes to write about the sufferings the believers and the hope of the future. It is in this context of hope he writes:

Romans 8:26-27 NLT

“And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, **we don’t know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words.** And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, **for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God’s own will.**”

When we are suffering, when we are confused, frustrated and weak, it is then that the Holy Spirit comes blowing across our hearts and mind. It is then that we pray in the Spirit and the Spirit of God prays for us, on our behalf to God.

This is the power of the Holy Spirit, not just to bring about supernatural miracles in the gifts of the Spirit. And not just the power of the Holy Spirit to bring about the fruits of the Spirit. But also, very intimately the power of the Spirit to bind us to the heart and will of God, to walk, endure, celebrate, and experience Him in the heights and depths of our existence and emotions!

I want us to not just recognize how much we need the Holy Spirit, but to learn to live and breath the rhythms and ways of God through the Spirit.

It’s not just that we are desperate to just survive this life we live, even in its worst possible moments, but that we can thrive and rise above just thinking of ourselves and our circumstances, but also each other and those who have yet experienced God’s grace and love. If we pursue this life in the Spirit, God will not only meet us, but keep on track with what He is doing and allow us the privilege of participating in the Kingdom of God which is here and yet coming. I want us to experience the joy of life as God intended for us – life to the fullest, abundant, and purposeful!

I would dare say that the majority of those who were once filled with or baptized in the Holy Spirit would say that it was seen as a spiritual high mark, as if it gave them a certain clout among the non-tongue speaking, non-pentecostal crowd in the community of faith.

I completely disagree. **I believe the experiences we have read about in the New Testament by Peter, Paul and others were simple steps of being a follower of Jesus and highlighted not as a humble brag, but as an absolute necessity to live the life of Jesus.**

When one struggles in their faith, and has difficulty not just reading God's Word, but understanding it. When one feels like everyone else knows how to do this Christian life, but not them. When one lives in constant fear and doubt of their own salvation. Or one just feels weak in their ability to hear from God. All these point to a craving, a stirring for more! I can tell you without a doubt – you need the infilling of the Holy Spirit. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is God's means of getting you and me to become what God wants us to become and to go where God wants us to go!

NOTES

We cannot see the wind, but we can feel it.

Scriptures

John 3:5-8 NLT

“Jesus replied, “I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. **Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life.** So don't be surprised when I say, ‘You must be born again.’ **The wind blows wherever it wants. Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it is going,** so you can't explain how people are born of the Spirit.””

John 20:20-23 NLT

“As he spoke, he showed them the wounds in his hands and his side. They were filled with joy when they saw the Lord! Again he said, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.” Then he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone’s sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.””

Romans 8:26-27 NLT

“And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don’t know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God’s own will.”

Questions

Q: What are the essentials, the absolute necessities of being a follower of Jesus?

Q: How often do you think about us having more than just a physical existence?

Q: What do you think about this odd phrase Jesus used: humans’ birth human life, but only the Spirit births a spiritual life?

Q: How do you feel when someone challenges your credentials, like with Nicodemus? Jesus, “You call yourself an expert yet don’t know these things?”

Q: Can you imagine what it must have been like when Jesus breathed on his followers? What do you think about that?

Q: Have you ever “groaned” before God in prayer? Talk about what happened?

Q: Do you practice “praying in the Spirit?” When and under what circumstances?

COMMENTARY REFERENCES

Strongs Concordance

pneuma: wind, spirit. 4151 *pneúma* – properly, *spirit (Spirit), wind, or breath*. The most frequent meaning (translation) of 4151 (*pneúma*) in the NT is “*spirit*” (“*Spirit*”). Only the context however determines which sense(s) is meant.

[Any of the above renderings (*spirit-Spirit, wind, breath*) of 4151 (*pneúma*) is always theoretically possible (*spirit, Spirit, wind, breath*). But when the attributive

adjective ("holy") is used, it always refers to the *Holy Spirit*. "Spirit" ("spirit") is by far the most common translation (application) of 4151 (*pneúma*).

The Hebrew counterpart (*rûach*) has the same range of meaning as 4151 (*pneúma*), i.e. it likewise can refer to *spirit/Spirit, wind, or breath.*]

Elliot's Commentary for English Readers

John 3:5 The message was, baptism with water; baptism with water, by which the Gentile had been admitted as a new-born babe to Judaism, the rite representing the cleansing of the life from heathen pollutions and devotion to the service of the true God; baptism with water, which John had preached in his ministry of reformation (comp. [Matthew 3:7](#)), declaring a like cleansing as needed for Jew and Gentile, Pharisee and publican, as the gate to the kingdom of heaven, which was at hand; baptism with water, which demanded a public profession in the presence of witnesses, and an open loyalty to the new kingdom, not a visit by night, under the secrecy of darkness—this is the message of God to the teacher seeking admission to His kingdom. This he would understand. It would now be clear to him why John came baptising, and why Jews were themselves baptised confessing their sins. There is no further explanation of the "outward and visible sign," but **the teaching passes on to the "inward and spiritual grace," the baptism of the Holy Ghost, the birth of the Spirit, which was the work of the Messiah Himself.**

Barne's Notes on the Bible

John 3:5 But, lest Nicodemus should suppose that this was all that was meant, he added that it was necessary that he should "be born of the Spirit" also. This was predicted of the Saviour, that he should "baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire," [Matthew 3:11](#). By this is **clearly intended that the heart must be changed by the agency of the Holy Spirit**; that the love of sin must be abandoned; that man must repent of crime and turn to God; that he must renounce all his evil propensities, and give himself to a life of prayer and holiness, of meekness, purity, and benevolence. **This great change is in the Scripture ascribed uniformly to the Holy Spirit, Titus 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; Romans 5:5; 1 Peter 1:22.**

Benson Commentary

John 3:6-8 The wind bloweth, — As if he had said, Nor have you any cause to be surprised if there be some things in this doctrine of regeneration which are of an obscure and unsearchable nature, for even in the natural world many things are so: the wind, for instance, bloweth where it listeth — According to its own nature, not thy will, sometimes one way, and sometimes another, not being subject to the direction or command of man; and thou hearest the sound thereof — And feelest its sensible and powerful effects on thy body; but canst not tell whence it cometh — Canst not explain the particular manner of its acting, or where it begins, and where it ceases blowing; for whatever general principles may be

laid down concerning it, when men come to account for its particular variations, the greatest philosophers often find themselves at a loss. So is every one that is born of the Spirit — The fact is plain, the manner of its operations is inexplicable. “It is worthy of remark,” says Dr. Campbell, “that as, in the Greek and in the Vulgate, the same word, in this passage, signifies both wind and spirit, the illustration is expressed with more energy than it is possible to give it in those languages which do not admit the same ambiguity.” But “I shall give what appears to me the purport of John 3:7-8. ‘Nor is there,’ as if he had said, ‘any thing in this either absurd or unintelligible. The wind, which in Hebrew is expressed by the same word as spirit, shall serve for an example. It is invisible; we hear the noise it makes, but cannot discover what occasions its rise or its fall. It is known to us solely by its effects. Just so it is with this second birth. The Spirit himself, the great agent, is invisible; his manner of operating is beyond our discovery; but the reality of his operation is perceived by the effects produced on the disposition and life of the regenerate.’”

The Bible Knowledge Commentary

John 3:8. This verse contains a wordplay which cannot be adequately expressed in English. The Greek word *pneuma* means both wind and Spirit. **The work of the Spirit (*pneuma*) is invisible and mysterious like the blowing of the wind (*pneuma*). Man controls neither.**

New Nave's Topical Bible

Of the Holy Spirit:

Wind, Song 4:16; incomprehensible, John 3:8; 1 Cor. 12:11; powerful, 1 Kin. 19:11, with Acts 2:2; sensible in its effects, John 3:8; reviving, Ezek. 37:9, 10, 14.

Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges

John 20:22. [*he breathed on them*] The very same Greek verb (here only in N.T.) is used by the LXX. in [Genesis 2:7](#) ([Wis 15:11](#)) of breathing life into Adam. This Gospel of the new Creation looks back at its close, as at its beginning ([John 1:1](#)), to the first Creation.

We are probably to regard the breath here not merely as the emblem of the Spirit ([John 3:8](#)), but as the *means* by which the Spirit was imparted to them.

‘Receive ye,’ combined with the action of breathing, implies this. This is all the more clear in the Greek, because *pneuma* means both ‘breath’ and ‘spirit,’ a point which cannot be preserved in English; but at least ‘Spirit’ is better than ‘Ghost’ We have here, therefore, an anticipation and earnest of Pentecost; just as Christ’s bodily return from the grave and temporary manifestation to them was an anticipation of His spiritual return and abiding Presence with them ‘even unto the end of the world.’

Vincent's Word Studies

Breathed on them (ἐνεφύσησεν)

Only here in the New Testament. The act was symbolic, after the manner of the Hebrew prophets. Compare [Ezekiel 37:5](#).

Ezekiel 37:3-6 NLT

“Then he asked me, “Son of man, can these bones become living people again?” “O Sovereign Lord,” I replied, “you alone know the answer to that.” Then he said to me, “Speak a prophetic message to these bones and say, ‘Dry bones, listen to the word of the Lord! **This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Look! I am going to put breath into you and make you live again!** I will put flesh and muscles on you and cover you with skin. **I will put breath into you, and you will come to life.** Then you will know that I am the Lord.’”

Strong's Concordance

4878 Joins to help. sunantilambanomai: to take hold with at the side, hence to take a share in, generally to help.

4726 groaning. stenagmós – groaning (sighing), especially brought on by circumstances creating great pressure. See 4727 (stenazō).

215 inexpressible. alalétos: inexpressible, too deep for words, unable to talk.

Elliot's Commentary for English Readers

Romans 8:26. With groanings which cannot be uttered.—**When the Christian's prayers are too deep and too intense for words, when they are rather a sigh heaved from the heart than any formal utterance**, then we may know that they are prompted by the Spirit Himself. It is He who is praying to God for us.

MacLaren's Exposition

Romans 8:26. They are shallow feelings that can be spoken. Language breaks down in the attempt to express our deepest emotions and our truest love. For all the deepest things in man, inarticulate utterance is the most self-revealing. Grief can say more in a sob and a tear than in many weak words; love finds its tongue in the light of an eye and the clasp of a hand. The groanings which rise from the depths of the Christian soul cannot be forced into the narrow frame-work of human language; and just because they are unutterable are to be recognized as the voice of the Holy Spirit.

Internet Links

<https://www.biblestudytools.com/bible-study/topical-studies/are-believers-given-7-gifts-of-the-holy-spirit.html> New Testament passages: Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12-14; Ephesians 4:7-13; and 1 Peter 4:10-11.

Nine gifts of the Holy Spirit: <https://www.bible-knowledge.com/gifts-of-the-holy-spirit/>

1. The Word of Knowledge
2. The Word of Wisdom
3. The Gift of Prophecy
4. The Gift of Faith
5. The Gifts of Healings
6. The Working of Miracles
7. The Discerning of Spirits
8. Different Kinds of Tongues
9. The Interpretation of Tongues

The 9 Fruits of the Holy Spirit

<https://www.bible-knowledge.com/fruits-of-the-holy-spirit/>

1. Love
2. Joy
3. Peace
4. Longsuffering
5. Kindness
6. Goodness
7. Faithfulness
8. Gentleness
9. Self-control

Summary of Messages – God Breathed:

- Part One: God breathed creation, order and peace into our world and lives.
- Part Two: God breathed so we don't just know God, we experience Him.
- Part Three: God breathed, praise and prayer, we call on His name when we breath.
- Part four: God breathed so we fully experience life, love and power through the Spirit.