



I Peter 1:5 and II Cor. 5:17

New International Version of the Holy Bible

KEPT & EMPOWERED BY THE SPIRIT

“. . . who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.” I Peter 1:5

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” II Corinthians 5:17

Three of the most common symbols found in Christian churches are the all seeing-eye, which is a symbol of the Father, the cross, a symbol for Christ and the dove, which is a symbol for the Holy Spirit.

The work of the Holy Spirit is fourfold. Before we are Christians, God does two things for us: he calls us by the Gospel and he enlightens us with his gifts. Putting it another way, he leads us to the truth that Jesus is our Savior and induces us to believe it. After our conversion, the Holy Spirit keeps us in the faith and empowers us to live a Christian life. Our sermon this morning will address itself to these two glorious activities of the Spirit.

I. KEPT BY THE SPIRIT

Our text says: **“. . . who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.” I Peter 1:5**

We are not only converted by the Spirit but also kept in the faith by the Spirit, Luther wrote in his great Reformation hymn: *“With might of ours can*

naught be done, soon were our loss effected.” According to Holy Scripture our fight isn’t with any human creature. Our fight is with principalities and powers in high places. Our fight is with the devil who was once a holy angel but who now roams the earth seeking whom he might destroy spiritually. **“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” I Peter 5:8**

The highway of history is covered with men and women who tried to fight the devil alone and lost. Judas, no doubt, was a believer. Yet you know that he betrayed our Lord for thirty pieces of silver and in despair hanged himself. Demas was a convert of the apostle Paul. Like many new converts, he worked with such dedication that the apostle proudly referred to him as a co-worker in the Lord. Yet, a few years later he wrote with sadness: **“ . . . for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me . . .” II Tim. 4:10** We hear about defections from the church almost daily. It truly is a sad picture.

What’s the cause of this tragedy? - The devil, the world, and our flesh? Not really. With the Holy Spirit’s help we can overcome all three, plus all the temptations with which they assault us. The basic trouble lies in this, that people forget that they have to have God’s help and that this help comes through the Gospel (*reading the Bible*). Just as we are converted through the Gospel, so we are kept in the faith through the Gospel. St. Paul told us a long time ago that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe. **“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.” Romans 1:16** If we were to cut the electrical line which leads from the power plant to this assembly hall, every light here would go out. The Word of God is the spiritual power line that leads from God to our hearts. Is it any wonder that our faith grows

weak and dies when we cut this power line to God? Often you hear people give the excuse that they don't have to go to church, that they can pray at home. True, but what they forget is that prayer comes from God. Prayer is the line through which we speak to God. The Gospel is the line through which God speaks to us and keeps us in the faith and gives us the ability to pray. If you want to win, then take the apostle's advice when he says: **"Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."** Ephesians 6:17

In your confirmation vow, among other things, you promised God: *"to make diligent use of the means of grace."* The means of grace to be used after confirmation are the Lord's Supper and the Word of God (*reading the Bible*). Blessed are you who make diligent use of both because the end of keeping the faith is salvation. That's what our text says you are kept by God's power through faith: **". . . through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation . . ."** I Peter 1:5

The verse preceding our text describes this salvation. According to the apostle it's an inheritance not made of perishable earthly materials, but rather that it is incorruptible, undefiled and it never fades. Divine inheritance is reserved in the heaven for all who are kept in the faith. This inheritance has many names - Christ's kingdom, heaven, eternal life, crown of righteousness. It's a place where sin and evil are absent and where joy, peace, love, and righteousness prevail forever. **". . . I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away . . ."** Revelations 21:1 **"Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will**

certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.” I Thessalonians 4:13-18

Isn't it good to know that all of us who want this eternal treasure can have it? No, you don't have to be afraid of losing your faith as long as you keep God on your side. When I was in grade school we enjoyed playing softball. Every noon recess we would quickly choose up sides. As soon as we had chosen sides, everyone knew who would win because there was one boy considerably bigger and stronger than the rest and he was also a pitcher. Whoever got him on their side was quite sure that they would win. Similarly, whoever gets on God's side is absolutely sure of winning. God is almighty and very able to crush the devil and all his helpers. God is all-knowing and understands the deception and tricks of the devil even before he reveals them. God is literally a superhuman team – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All three are almighty, all-knowing, and all-loving. Listen to the promise of the Son: **“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one.” John 10:25-30**

Nothing can pluck you out of the hand of God who created you for eternity - not riches or poverty, health or sickness, parents or children, husband or wife, false teachers or preachers, people or devils. You are redeemed by his precious blood and brought to faith in Christ through the Gospel. You simply cannot get lost unless you become so stupid and proud that you feel you can fight your battles alone and reject God's gracious help. So go ahead and live, you have nothing to fear. God is on your side.

II. EMPOWERED BY THE SPIRIT

Secondly, we note that the Spirit who keeps you in the Christian faith also gives you the power to live by that faith and to enjoy it. The saying goes: *“Life begins at forty.”* However, real life worth living begins not at birth nor at forty, but at the moment of conversion.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” II Corinthians 5:17 The Bible means exactly what it says. The day when you are brought to Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit you are a new creature. You are no longer what you used to be. Your attitudes are different, you have different values, your heart has been changed and you live in a new relationship with God. Before conversion every person is self-centered. Before conversion a person’s basic question in every situation is: *“What can I get out of it?”* There is no interest in God and very little interest in people. The Christian is God-centered. Like St. Paul after his conversion, a Christian asks: *“Lord, what do you want me to do?”* This person is interested in people simply because they are people standing in need of services.

The unconverted business person doesn’t ask whether a product will help those who use it, or whether the business is for the good of the community. The basic question is: *“Will my product sell? Will it make money?”* The Christian business person is also concerned about making a profit. However, there is a desire to produce a product which will help those who use it.

The unconverted worker usually asks one question: *“Where and how can I make the most money with the least effort?”* While the Christian worker is also concerned about making money there is also an interest in putting in a fair day’s work for a fair day’s pay.

The unconverted farmer speaks as a self-made person and feels a crop depends entirely on what one does and how nature responds. The

converted farmer knows that much depends upon self but also on how a crop and profits come from the Lord who not only made heaven and earth but still preserves and controls it.

The unconverted doesn't mind lying even in a church at the very altar of God. This person brashly vows to remain a loyal and faithful spouse in marriage until separated by death, while at heart feels that if the marriage doesn't please - a divorce can be obtained. And you know that many do divorce not caring a great deal how much the spouse and children will get hurt. The Christian, however, takes the marriage vow seriously. Even though difficulties and problems arise after marriage, the Christian knows that with God's help these problems can be solved to the happiness and well-being of all concerned. Instead of running to the divorce court, a Christian runs to God.

The unconverted in the day of success boastfully takes all the credit and in the day of trouble blames others and maybe even God. The Christian praises God for success and in the day of trouble knows that help can come from God.

The unconverted spends money on pleasure, re-invests it, or hoards it in a bank. The Christian gladly shares a part of the income for church and charity and in fact lives and works in order to be a blessing to others.

The unconverted in sickness and death has no place to go but reaches a dead end street with no hope. The Christian, however, looks ahead, knowing that death is the beginning of life - an eternal life a thousand times better than any life one can expect in this world.

If any person is in Christ, he or she is a new creature. Together with this new attitude, the Christian also receives new powers from the Spirit. Christ himself said: **"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."** John 15:5 The non-Christian operates exclusively

with self-made power. It's all up to the individual. The Christian operates with God-power, for the power of God is within. Pastors and elders can tell you from experience that drunkards will say: *"I can quit anytime I want to"* – but rarely if ever overcome their drunkenness while those who call on God for help do. It's that way with every evil and all that's spiritually good. According to Galatians chapter 5 spiritual gifts are explained: **"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."** Galatians 5:22

If any person is in Christ, that person is a new creature. Since we live in a sinful world we have at times been hurt by someone in the home, at work, school, or church, and maybe even by a pastor. As a Christian, you have forgiven them and held no grudge. How can this be? - Because the Holy Spirit gave you the power to do it. You are different than the unbelievers who can't forgive or forget.

We have to admit that you and I at times act very much like the unbelievers because we forget to use the power of the Spirit which we have within us. A story is told of the new rancher who wanted to clear out the woods on his new place. The salesman sold him a gas-powered chain saw with the promise that it would cut twenty times more wood than a regular hand-saw. The next day the rancher returned, demanding his money back. After discussion, the salesman discovered that the rancher had used it like an ordinary saw instead of turning on the gas-powered motor. How foolish can a man be? Yet, no more foolish than we are when we act like ordinary people and fail to use the power of the Holy Spirit within us!

We have the power to change our sinful habits and live a new life for the happiness of ourselves and those who live with us. The Holy Spirit in his grace has given us a new motor and filled it with gas. Even more, the Holy Spirit will turn the motor on for us whenever we ask him.

**Holy Ghost with power divine
Cleanse this guilty heart of mine;
In thy mercy pity me,
From sin's bondage set me free.**

**Holy Spirit, all divine,
Dwell within this heart of mine;
Cast down every idol throne,
Reign supreme, and reign alone.**

Lutheran Hymn number: 234