

fused to accept Yeshua as the One sent from the Father, He responds by showing that their rejection of Him proves their true character.

“You are doing the deeds of your father.” They said to Him, “We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God.” Yeshua said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word. You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” (Jn 8:41–44)

Here we see in Yeshua’s words the same stark contrast that John gives when comparing those whose lives are characterized by righteousness as contrasted with those who live in unrighteousness. To say that someone who is living a life of sin is following the ways of the devil may seem in our post-modern world to be too strong of a statement. But note that when Yeshua made this analysis, He was talking to those who considered themselves to be Jews who set the high standard for religious observance and holiness. This reminds one of Yeshua’s words in Matt 7:22–23.

Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’ (Matt 7:22–23)

Thus, the point John is making is clear: a person who claims to have Yeshua as their savior, but whose life is filled with sin, is deceived and is lost. The person who has been truly born from above will evidence that reality in the manner in which they live. Righteousness is the living fruit of genuine, saving faith.

9 No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

The NASB, along with most of the other English translations, add words to help uncover the meaning of the Greek grammar which John utilizes. The verb “is born” (*γεγεννημένος, gegennēmenos*) is in a form

(perfect passive participle) which denotes action that took place in the past but its influence remains active in the present. Thus, to be “born of God” means to be “born again” or “born from above” as noted in John 3:3 and Yeshua’s words to Nicodemus.

Yeshua answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again (or ‘from above’) he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (Jn 3:3)

The very metaphor of “birth,” when applied to the spiritual birth of the soul in regeneration, emphasizes a number of important things. First is the obvious fact that the one who is born has nothing to do with the birth process itself. To be born is thus that which takes place by forces outside of the one being born. The spiritual birth that takes place when a person comes to faith in Yeshua is the work of God and God alone. No one can “birth himself” or “birth herself” into the family of God. It must be, and can only be, the sovereign work of God in His mercy and grace.

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (Jn 1:12–13)

Second, birth obviously marks the beginning of a new life and this is perhaps the primary emphasis John has in our text. To be “born of God” means to be a child in His family (cf. 1Jn 3:1) and thus to take on the characteristics of that family. Since the Father is righteous, and the Son of God, Yeshua, is righteous, and the Holy Spirit (Ruach HaKodesh) is righteous, then the children of God will likewise be known by their righteous lives. This means, quite obviously, that those who are truly children of God will not be those whose lives are characterized as “practicing sin.” This translation of the NASB properly translates “practices sin” in order to emphasize the present tense of the verb “to sin.” Likewise the NIV translation gives the proper sense:

No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. (1Jn 3:9, NIV)

because His seed abides in him – The word “seed” is used as a metaphor

for “God’s nature” or “God’s principle of life.”¹ Some have considered “His seed” (σπέρμα αὐτοῦ) to be a reference to the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit),² though others deny this connection.³ Others consider “His seed” to be the “word of God” (cp. 1Jn 1:10; 2:24)⁴ which is received by the person who is born again and is used by the Ruach in the process of regeneration, as Peter teaches:

for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. (1Pet 1:23)

It seems obvious that in our verse John is emphasizing what he has already stated, and will state again in the next verse, namely, that those who are saved through the word of the Gospel and faith in Yeshua become members of God’s family, that is, “children of God” (3:1, 2, 10: 5:2), for they have been “born again” or “born from above” through the work of the Holy Spirit. Thus, it would seem that John combines within the metaphor of the “seed” both the word of God and the work of the Ruach. For the process of regeneration is the work of the Spirit in opening the spiritual eyes of the elect to the truth of the word, endowing them with faith to receive the word of the Gospel and working within them the desire to commit themselves to obedience to the word of God. Taking this same view, Marshall comments:

The Spirit is operative in the preaching of the Word which produces the new birth in the hearts of those who hear it and respond with faith (1Thess 1:5f.). As a result of the continuing presence of the Word in the believer’s heart through the Spirit he cannot sin. Whatever is born of God must share God’s character, and His opposition to sin. It should be unthinkable for such a person to sin.⁵

1 Kistemaker, *1John*, p. 303.

2 Cf. Strecker, *1John*, p. 102; Kruse, *1John*, p. 124; Schnackenburg, *R. Die Johannesbriefe*. in *Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament* (reiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1979).

3 E.g., Yarbrough, *1John*, p. 195.

4 Luther took this view: “quoniam semen dei, i.e. verbum... verbum dei manet, est aeternum semen” (“Now the seed of God, that is, the Word [of God]...the word of God remains; it is eternal seed”). M. Luther, *Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (= “Weimar” edition) 20.705, 20f–706, 1. (Quoted from Strecker, *1John*, p. 102.

5 I. Howard Marshall, *1John*, pp. 186-87.

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and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. – John makes it clear that the reason one who is truly a child of God cannot live a life dominated and characterized by sin is because he has been born anew by God and that “His seed abides in him.” The Greek verb translated “abides” is μένω (*menō*) which clearly gives the sense of “remains in him.” Here John is making a bold statement about the inevitable perseverance of all who are born from above, for the abiding presence of the Spirit of God Who indwells the believer is God’s seal that secures growing sanctification as well as eternal salvation.

In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation — having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, (Eph 1:13)

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (Eph 4:30)

Thus John’s inspired words emphasize that if a person has been truly born again through the work of the Ruach by Whom the truth of God’s word, the Gospel, is received by faith in Yeshua, then that person will be kept by God’s power and never lost to Him. God never loses any of His children!

But this raises an important question: if it is the work of the indwelling Spirit of God within the life of the believer which secures his or her status as a “child of God,” does this apply only to those who have come to faith in Yeshua after His coming to earth and after the pouring out of the Spirit at Shavuot (Acts 2), or does it apply equally to believers before Yeshua’s incarnation? Or to ask the question in a different manner: Do believers after the coming of Yeshua have a greater level of spirituality than did those believers who lived before the coming of Yeshua? Did the Spirit of God enable believers before the coming of Yeshua as He does to believers after Yeshua’s coming?

----- *Excursus: The Spirit’s Work before Yeshua’s Coming* -----

One of the primary issues fostering the idea that spirituality increased after the coming of Yeshua is the matter of the Spirit’s work. It is usually argued that the increased activity of the Spirit in the Apostolic era proves this to be the case. There is no doubt that the activity of the Spirit in the Apostolic era is a significant signal that the last days had arrived, and the promised work of the Spirit was therefore being realized. If by nothing else, the mere increase of the mention of the Spirit shows this to be the case.

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But we must ask ourselves some very fundamental questions. 1) Was the method of salvation different before and after the coming of Yeshua? (This traces the question of whether or not the increased work of the Spirit was specifically in the realm of producing a greater holiness.) 2) Is the increased activity of the Spirit in the Apostolic era related to a specific mission? 3) Does the increased activity of the Spirit in the Apostolic era produce a more significant level of spirituality within the people of God?

Was the method of salvation different before and after the coming of Yeshua?

While the evangelical Christian church would deny that there have existed two “methods” of salvation, in practical terms Christianity has taught this. Or to put it another way, the Church’s creeds and theology affirm the singular nature of salvation, but the practice of the Church tells another story.

Of course, some of the Christian church (and an increasing number in our day, it seems) readily admit that there were two ways of salvation: one for those before Messiah, and one for those after Him. Some might even say that the line of demarcation was not so much the death and resurrection of Messiah, but His appearance upon the earth (so that John the Baptist becomes a kind of “line of demarcation”).

Regardless of exactly what any given segment of the Christian Church teaches on this issue, it is impossible biblically to sustain an argument for multiple ways of salvation. For if there exists more than one way of salvation, then some are “saved” apart from the death of Yeshua, and this can in no way be sustained by either the Tanach nor the Apostolic Scriptures. To the complete contrary, all of the Apostolic writers affirm that salvation is only by faith in Yeshua, even for those who lived before His appearance. The two classic examples as far as the Apostle Paul is concerned are Abraham and David. Paul’s argument in Romans 4 is fundamentally flawed if, while using Abraham and David as examples of justification by faith, they were, in fact, justified on grounds other than faith in Yeshua. The very fact that Paul uses Abraham and David as prime examples of what he is teaching about justification by faith illustrates his presupposition, namely, that all are justified on the same grounds, by the same exercise of faith in the same object, Yeshua.

But we should ask further what Paul believed about God’s method of justification. What takes place when a sinner is justified? Even a cursory look at Paul’s teaching in this area reveals that he links the activity of the Spirit in regeneration (making the soul alive to see, understand,

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and receive the gospel) as an integral and necessary part of justification. That being the case, he must have believed that the same Spirit did the same work of regeneration in the lives of the ancient believers as well as in those of his day. This conclusion is inescapable.

- Circumcision of the heart is accomplished by the Spirit, Rom 2:29, but the Torah exhorted the people of Moses' day to have their hearts circumcised as well, cf. Deut 10:16; 30:6. Jeremiah exhorted the people to the same action, Jer 4:4.
- Apart from the Spirit, Yeshua is veiled in the Torah, 2Cor 3:14–17.

But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Messiah. But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. (2Cor 3:14–17)

If those redeemed in ancient times were saved as we are, i.e., by faith in Yeshua, they did so only as the Spirit unveiled Him in the Tanach, opened their eyes to see Him, and gave them faith to believe.

- Apart from the Spirit, the Torah only brings condemnation, damnation, and death, 2Cor 3:7; Rom 8:2; 8:9ff. How then could David write that the Torah restores the soul unless the Spirit was active in this restoration? Psalm 19:7ff
- The requirements of the Torah can only be lived out by those who have the Spirit, Rom 8:5ff. Those who do not have the Spirit cannot keep the Torah.

For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the Torah of God, for it is not even able to do so.... (Rom 8:5–7)

Since it is clear that those who were of true faith in ancient Israel were described as obeying Torah, we must conclude they had the Spirit.

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- The deeds of the flesh can only be put to death by the Spirit, Rom 8:13.

Did the believers in ancient Israel put to death the deeds of the flesh? If not, how could they have obtained any personal holiness?

- Knowledge that one is truly a child of God is given by the Spirit, Rom 8:16.

The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, (Rom 8:16)

Did the believers of old know they were God's children? Surely they did, for they are put forward as models of holiness for us to follow (Noah, 2Pet 2:4; Elijah, James 5:17; Abraham, Rom 4:16, 19; Sarah, 1Per 3:6; and all those listed in Heb 11).

- The Spirit helps us in our prayers, taking our requests before God, Rom 8:26. Were the believers of old helped in their prayers? If not, were their prayers effective? By all accounts they were (note the prayer of Elijah, James 5:17). This presupposes the presence of the Spirit aiding them in their prayers.
- No one can know the thoughts of God apart from the Spirit's work of revelation/illumination, 1Cor 2:10ff.

For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. (1Cor 2:10–11)

Did the believers of old know the thoughts of God? Surely they did, as the Tanach everywhere attests.

- Sanctification is the work of the Spirit of God, 1Cor 6:11

Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Yeshua Messiah and in the Spirit of our God. (1Cor 6:11)

It is only in the Spirit that one is able to overcome the flesh, Gal 5:16. Were the believers of old being sanctified? Were they able to overcome the flesh?

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- Eternal life is connected with the righteousness produced by the Spirit.

For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. (Gal 6:8)

Did the believers of old possess eternal life?

- Salvation is possible only through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit.

He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, (Tit 3:5)

Did the believers of old possess salvation?

From these passages it is eminently clear that at least Paul's working presupposition was that the faith of all believers, in all eras, was directly tied to the work of the Spirit of God in connection with the salvific plan of the Father, based upon the work of Yeshua as Prophet, Priest, and King.

Is the increased activity of the Spirit in the Apostolic Era related to a specific mission?

The increased activity of the Spirit in the Apostolic Era was an increase in quantity, not quality. If we stop for a minute and ask those who believe the Spirit's work in the Apostolic era was an increase in quality—if we ask what they actually mean by this, their answers betray the underlying notion that there are two ways of salvation. For if the work of the Spirit is greater in quality (= better, producing more holiness), then does this mean that the believers in and following the time of Yeshua were more holy? Would this mean that they have a closer relationship with God or in some measure knew Him in a way the ancient believer did not? To postulate such an outcome is to admit that our salvation experience is greater than theirs, for salvation consists not merely in forgiveness of sins but ultimately in sanctification and communion with God. If the believers in and following the time of Yeshua have the opportunity for a level of holiness not given to the believers of former generations, then there are two standards of holiness, and consequently two kinds of salvation. But the standard of holiness

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maintained both by the Torah (Lev 11:44) as well as by the Apostles (1Pet 1:16) is nothing less than the holiness of God Himself.

For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. And you shall not make yourselves unclean with any of the swarming things that swarm on the earth. (Lev 11:44)

but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY." (1Pet 1:15–16)

It is to this standard that He calls His people in every era, not being satisfied by a lower standard in the time before the Messiah, and expecting a higher one after His appearance. In fact, the standard of holiness He requires is nothing short of the highest standard, i.e., the standard of His own holiness, "be holy as I am holy." And the Torah is a verbal revelation of His holiness.

The increased mention of the Spirit of God in the Apostolic Scriptures coincides with the fulfillment of the promise made by the prophets that in the last days the Spirit would be poured out afresh upon Israel to enable her to be a light to the nations. This means that the Spirit would be increasingly active among the Gentiles as the promised harvest of the nations is realized. That the majority of the Apostolic Scriptures were from the hand of Paul, himself the Apostle to Gentiles, gives yet another reason why the work of the Spirit in the Apostolic era is so much more noted than in the Tanach. In ancient Israel, the Spirit of God is virtually inactive among the nations. In contrast, in the Apostolic Writings, dominated by the Pauline epistles, the promised activity of the Spirit among the Gentiles becomes a major focus. Paul wanted his readers to recognize the fact that the promised ingathering of the nations, begun at Shavuot (Acts 2) was surely in progress, and that God had appointed him to be a major leader in that endeavor. The promised enablement of the Spirit makes possible the ingathering of the nations.

Does the increased activity of the Spirit in the Apostolic era produce a more significant level of spirituality within the people of God?

The obvious answer to this is "no." The activity of the Spirit is wider, upon a greater number of people, and therefore more prominent, but this increase is in quantity, not quality. The same Spirit is active with the same message, producing faith in the same Object (Yeshua), and sanctifying God's children according to the same level of holiness

166 – Excursus: The Spirit’s Work before Yeshua’s Coming 1John: Chapter 3 in all eras and all generations. To conclude otherwise is to ignore the overarching teaching of the Scriptures.

But if this be the case, how is one to understand a verse like John 14:17—

that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. (John 14:17)

Usually this verse is brought forward by those who see a new and enhanced spirituality in the Apostolic era as teaching that the Spirit was only “with” the believers of ancient times (“with” = less intimate) while He is “in” the believers following the ascension of Yeshua (“in” = more intimate). But this is a naive approach to the use of prepositions in the Greek. “With you” utilizes the preposition *πάρα* (*para*), “with, alongside of” while “in you” has *ἐν* (*en*), usually translated “in, by,” etc. But we should note the interesting parallel between the words used in this text when compared to Exodus 31:13, which uses almost the same construction in the Lxx Greek:

Exodus 31:13 Lxx	John 14:17
<p>καὶ σὺ σύνταξον τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ λέγων ὁρᾶτε καὶ τὰ σάββατά μου φυλάξεσθε σημεῖόν ἐστιν <u>παρ’ ἐμοὶ καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν</u> εἰς τὰς γενεὰς ὑμῶν ἵνα γνῶτε ὅτι ἐγὼ κύριος ὁ ἀγιάζων ὑμᾶς</p> <p>But as for you, speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘You shall surely observe My sabbaths; for this is a sign <u>between Me and you</u> throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you.</p>	<p>τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας, ὃ ὁ κόσμος οὐ δύναται λαβεῖν, ὅτι οὐ θεωρεῖ αὐτὸ οὐδὲ γινώσκει· ὑμεῖς γινώσκετε αὐτό, ὅτι <u>παρ’ ὑμῖν μένει καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν ἔσται.</u></p> <p>that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides <u>with you and will be in you.</u></p>

Here, in Exodus 31:13, the same Greek construction as in John 14:17 is used to translate the common Hebrew *בין ... בין*, “between . . . between.” It could be that the phrase “with you . . . will be in you” simply reflects the Semitic construction “between you,” meaning that the Spirit would be active among them as He had been while they walked with Yeshua. Yeshua’s point would thus be that even after He left, the Spirit’s work would remain, strengthening them, leading them, and equipping them to accomplish the work He had commissioned them to do.

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If the Greek construction does not reflect a Hebrew use of the preposition בֵּינְךָ, “between,” “among,” the Greek could just as easily be understood as “with you (now) ... will be among you (in the future).” Whatever the case, the idea that the Spirit of God is somehow localized “beside” you now but “indwelling” you later cannot be sustained on the basis of the prepositions—they are far too fluid in their meaning to allow such strict delineation.

It should also be noted that there are significant textual variations on this verse in the Greek text. The UBS text gives the reading “with you ... will be in you” its lowest rating of probability for being the original text. In fact, Westcott in his commentary opts for the reading that yields “He abideth by you and is in you” (taking the present tense as the original reading, not the future tense).¹ Whatever the case, this verse should surely not be considered foundational for the belief that there was an increased, personal and internalized work of the Spirit after the death and resurrection of Yeshua.

Another verse often pointed to by those who believe the time following Yeshua brought a higher spirituality to the people of God is John 7:39:

But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet *given*, because Yeshua was not yet glorified. (Jn 7:39)

The first thing that we should note about this text is that the word “given” in the translation above is added by the translators. Though it shows up in some manuscripts, the clear weight of the early Greek manuscripts do not include it. Its addition in some of the manuscripts is best explained as an attempt to assure the reader that John was not denying the existence of the Holy Spirit.

What could John mean by stating that “the Spirit was not yet?” The key is in the following phrase, “because Yeshua was not yet glorified.” That is, until Yeshua ascended to the Father, reclaiming the glory He had set aside for His work as the Servant Messiah (cf. Jn 17:5), the Spirit could not become active in the task of harvesting the nations. The phrase “the Spirit was not yet” must mean, therefore, that the work of ingathering the nations, requiring the intercession of Yeshua as the High Priest in the heavenly Tabernacle (cf. Hebrews 7-9), could not be accomplished until Yeshua ascended as High Priest and the Spirit en-

1 Brooke Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John* (Baker, 1980 [original publication 1908]), 2:177.

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abled the disciples to launch the final harvest of the nations through the message of the gospel they would carry.

It seems quite clear that John was referring to the special and specific work of the Spirit in equipping the disciples to be the initiating force in the promised harvest of the nations. This is why they were to wait in Jerusalem until the Spirit would empower them for their mission:

but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

Thus John’s statement that “the Spirit was not yet” must be interpreted to mean that He was not yet active in the harvest work of the nations, a work He would activate after the ascension of the risen Messiah. Surely the verse cannot be interpreted to mean that the eternal Spirit was not yet in existence, or that somehow the Spirit of God was inactive. Any reading of the Hebrew Scriptures shows this to be entirely out of the question.

Once again, this verse, like others brought forward, when taken in its context, in no way supports the idea that a higher spirituality was initiated during and after the time of Yeshua.

It seems clear, then, that the idea of a greater spirituality among the people of God after the appearance of Yeshua is not warranted. Nor do the Scriptures support the viewpoint that the Spirit did not indwell the “Old Testament believers” and that His indwelling presence only took place after the pouring out of the Spirit at Shavuot (Acts 2).

The primary verse used by those who teach that the Spirit of God did not permanently indwell believers before the coming of Yeshua, is Ps 51:11, in which David implores God not to take His Holy Spirit from him.

Do not cast me away from Your presence
And do not take
Your Holy Spirit from me. (Ps 51:11)

But this verse of the Psalms should be collated with the historical recounting of the kingship being taken from Saul and passed to David. This we find in 1Sam 16:13–14, when Samuel is anointing David as the future king.

Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward. And Samuel arose and

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went to Ramah. Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD terrorized him. (1Sam 16:13–14)

What is evident from these verses is that the anointing of the Spirit in this instance specifically denoted the empowerment of the Spirit to reign as king. The empowering work of the Spirit was removed from Saul and given to David.

It is in this same manner that David, in his prayer of contrition (Ps 51), pleads with God not to remove the empowering work of the Spirit by Whom He would be enabled to remain as king and to have success as the appointed leader of the nation of Israel. That this prayer was obviously granted is confirmed by David himself in his final words:

The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue. (2Sam 23:2)

Wood likewise understands Ps 51:11 in this way:

“Take not thy holy spirit from me.” These words have often been misunderstood; some even believe that David was requesting that he not lose his personal salvation. But David was not thinking of this; he simply did not want to lose the special Spirit-empowerment that had been his from the day of his anointing by Samuel. He had seen Saul lose his empowerment when the Holy Spirit had been taken from him—his manner of rule had rapidly deteriorated after that—and he did not want the same to happen to him. The words indicate, then, his recognition of continuous Spirit-empowerment.¹

Conclusion

The work of the Holy Spirit (Ruach HaKodesh) in drawing the elect to faith in Yeshua and thus to obtaining eternal life through the grace of God in the salvific work of Yeshua, is the same in all eras, both before and after the coming of Yeshua. While those believers who lived before Yeshua's incarnation were saved by faith forward-looking to the One Who would come, those who are saved following Yeshua's incarnation are saved by the same faith in the One Who has come and Who has completed His sacrificial work of His death and resurrection. And, the work of the Spirit in calling, regeneration, endowing faith, indwelling

1 Leon J. Wood, *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament* (Zondervan, 1976), p. 51.

the believer, securing his or her sanctification, and resurrection to eternal life is the same for all who are saved in all eras.

This is substantiated by the fact that:

- 1) the Scriptures everywhere speak of only one means of salvation for all peoples, in all generations;
- 2) the Scriptures teach that the Spirit must be active in all phases of personal salvation, from justification through sanctification, leading to glorification;
- 3) that the increased mention of the Spirit in the Apostolic Scriptures reflects the empowerment promised for the ingathering of the nations, fulfilling the promise given to Abraham that “in your seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed” (Gen 12:3).

----- *End of Excursus* -----

The application of this study to our immediate text in 1John 3:9 is obvious: John has emphasized that the mark of authenticity for all who confess faith in Yeshua is that their life is characterized by righteousness and not by sin. And, that which guarantees this to be the case is that “His seed remains in him.” This means that the ongoing, indwelling work of the Spirit in applying the truth of the Scriptures to the child of God is that which secures the perseverance of the children of God to avail themselves of the means of God’s grace by which they are more and more conformed to the image of Yeshua Himself. This is equally true of believers before as well as after the coming of Yeshua.

10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

John now summarizes the current paragraph (vv. 4–10) by repeating the criteria by which the children of God are identified and seen to be distinct from the children of the devil. For John, there is no middle ground. He speaks in two absolute categories only: light or darkness, truth or lies, God or the devil, life or death.¹ For John it is an “either-or” situation: either a person is a child of God through faith in Yeshua, or a child of the devil, denying Yeshua.

And how does one know to which category he or she belongs? It is by one’s life actions and decisions. John puts this in the negative: the unbeliever does not practice righteousness, i.e., in accordance with

¹ Kistemaker, *1John*, p. 304.