

THE PERSON AND WORK OF THE

**HOLY
SPIRIT**

IN THE LIFE OF THE BELIEVER

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CHAPTER

01

**WHO IS
THE HOLY SPIRIT?**

Introduction

I would like to invite you on a journey of discovering who the Holy Spirit is and what role He plays in the believer's life. If you are hungering for a deeper walk with God, then I encourage you to approach this series of teaching on the Person of the Holy Spirit prayerfully and trust God to draw you into a deeper experience of His love and power.

As you study the work of the Holy Spirit, my prayer is that Christ will be magnified in your life.

Who is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is probably the most misunderstood member of the Holy Trinity (God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit). Many people think that the Holy Spirit is an impersonal force or merely the power of God operative in the world. The King James Version of the Bible called the Holy Spirit the Holy Ghost, which caused Him to be 'something' to be feared. I think many people are scared of the Holy Spirit, simply because they don't know much about Him.

When a lecturer at a Seminary asked the students what they thought of the Holy Spirit, one student referred to Him as a 'grey, oblong blur' (Gordon Fee).

And what about you? Is the Holy Spirit a 'blur' to you? Is He vague? Do you experience His presence? Do you experience His power? Do you experience His passion? Do you feel His nearness when you pray; when you worship? Do you feel Him helping you when you witness to your faith? Do you hear His voice? Do you sense Him guiding you in your journey of faith?

The person of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is a person. We all have a personality. If one of your friends is asked to give a description of you, they won't start by giving your ID number! They will begin to describe you—your personal character traits; what stands out in your personality. For example, they may say that you are a fun-loving person; that you are a gifted musician; that you are kind and generous; that you are kind and warm-hearted, and so on. If someone was present who did not know you, after hearing the description they would now have some idea of what you are like.

The Holy Spirit has a personality

That is exactly true of the Holy Spirit. He has a personality. He has a character. And the only reason why people know so little about Him is that they have generally not taken the time to discover Him.

I want to emphasize again that the Holy Spirit is a person; He is not a ghost or a 'force'. He has feelings. He can be easily offended. Because He is gentle (part of His personality), He is easily offended.

The Bible depicts the Him as a dove. Think of the attributes of a dove. A dove is gentle; a dove is sensitive. When Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River, the Bible says that "when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him" (Mat 3:16 ESV).

If we think of how the Holy Spirit manifests Himself, we can get a pretty good idea of the kind of person He is. He comforts. He convinces (convicts) us of our sin. He gives us peace. Therefore, He is peaceful. He gives us joy; he is the sum total of happiness. He gives us courage.

These are all very personal and experiential attributes of the Holy Spirit. He possesses the characteristics of a person: intelligence, thought, speech and language. He also performs the actions of a person: He leads, guides, works, gives, fellowships, convicts, teaches, comforts, counsels and prays.

As I said earlier, the most outstanding character trait of the Holy Spirit is His gentleness. For that reason, He is never pushy. He will never force us to comply with him. However, when we submit to Him, when we desire Him to take the lead in our lives, then He comes with His grace and power, changing our lives and making us effective in our walk of faith. The Holy Spirit will never violate our personality. He may certainly disturb us and challenge us and ruffle our feathers, but He is absolutely gracious. When He challenges us to change and conform to the Person of Jesus, He is also ready to help us and empower us to make those changes. The more we submit to the Holy Spirit, the more we will feel His presence and power.

The only way we can experience anything of God is through the Holy Spirit. God is Spirit and the only way that we can relate to Him is when our spirit has been brought to life by His Spirit; when We are regenerated; when We are born again by the Holy Spirit. And once that happens, we have a growing experience of the Person of the Holy Spirit. He alone is the one who helps us relate to God the Father and God the Son.

Christianity is experiential

We must not confuse emotionalism with experiencing God with our feelings. Christianity is experiential. When we are born again, we experience change in our lives. When the Holy Spirit brings us to life in Christ, we experience God's love and forgiveness; it's not something we can learn in a book. The Bible says that 'the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit'.

We know God loves us because the Holy Spirit communicates that to us. "...because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Romans 5:5).

The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

The best way of learning about the Holy Spirit is to see how He has worked in the history of the world. As part of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit is involved in all that God does. He was involved in creation. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters" (Genesis 1:1, 2).

The Old Testament testifies to the work of the Holy Spirit in and through the lives of God's faithful people. We have thousands of years of history testifying to the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of Israel, God's covenant people. He revealed Himself in so many ways. For instance, He meets with Abraham, a complete pagan, and instructs him to "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you" (Genesis 12:1). Clearly it was the Holy Spirit who spoke this word of instruction to Abraham.

Then we read how God spoke to Moses in the burning bush in the desert. God's people were under the oppressive rule of the Egyptians. One day, while looking after his father-in-law's goats in the desert, Moses sees a bush that is burning, yet it is not being destroyed. When he draws near, he hears God speaking to him and telling him that he is going to be the deliverer of his people. Moses did not see a vision of God. He did not 'see' God, yet God spoke to him in a very powerful and profound way. It was the Holy Spirit who spoke to Moses. And from then on God would speak very clearly to Him and give him instructions on how to lead the people of Israel out of slavery into the Promised Land. The Bible tells us that God spoke to Moses 'face-to-face' (Exodus 33:11).

The work of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament

Luke's gospel mentions the Holy Spirit 19 times. When Zechariah, John the Baptist's father, was in the Temple, he had an encounter with an angel who told him that his son, John, would be great in the eyes of the Lord and that he would be filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:15).

Then the Holy Spirit was active in the life of John's mother. When Elizabeth went to visit her cousin Mary, (the mother of Jesus), John leaped in his mother's womb and she was filled with the Holy Spirit. "And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit" (Luke 1:41).

Further on in the narrative we read how John's father had an encounter with an angel in the Temple, was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke out a prophetic song of praise (Luke 1:67).

The work of the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus

Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit. The angel visited Mary with the news that she was to conceive the Saviour of the world. When Mary asked the angel how it would all take place, he said: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy--the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). That is very similar language to what we read about in the story of the creation of the world:

"The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters" (Gen 1:2).

When Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River, the Holy Spirit came down upon Him like a dove.

"And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him" (Mat 3:16).

The very testimony of Jesus likens the Spirit to a dove hovering over Him.

From that moment on, Jesus ministered in the power of the Holy Spirit, performing many miracles, healing the sick, casting out devils, raising the dead and teaching and prophesying with great authority.

Jesus prepares the way for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit

Jesus spent three years training the disciples. He taught them how to pray, heal the sick and cast out demons. They were accustomed to His ways and His teaching. But as Jesus approached His death, He gathered the disciples to explain that He was going away; that He was going to die and rise again. They would not experience Him in the way to which they had grown accustomed. Imagine trying to help the disciples understand that He was going away yet not going away! All they wanted was to continue life with Jesus, yet it was not going to happen the way that they expected.

When Jesus broke the news to them, they were understandably grief stricken. But Jesus explained that it would be to their advantage that He was going away. Imagine trying to grasp the fact that it would be good that your closest friend, your Lord and Master was going away and it would be good for you! But it was. Jesus was preparing the way for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit for all believers, everywhere, to experience the presence and power of God.

“Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you” (John 16:7).

Then further on in the passage, Jesus says: “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you” (John 14:17).

We can understand so much about the Holy Spirit through the words of Jesus. Jesus Himself was a helper, a comforter. He was the one who stood alongside them, helping them, encouraging them to live and witness for Him in the world.

After His death, the disciples were going to experience the risen Lord, but only through the Holy Spirit. And the reason why Jesus said that it would be to their advantage, was because they would experience the nearness of Jesus and His power, anywhere, any time.

Jesus also taught them that the Spirit would be their teacher. According to Jesus, He was the Spirit of truth who would guide them.

Then Jesus said “He will glorify me...” In other words, the Holy Spirit would bring honour to Him. The only way that we can bring honour to Jesus is by the help of the Holy Spirit.

What Jesus was saying was that just as He had been with them in the flesh, so He would be with them through the Holy Spirit. It is as if he was literally with them. And that is the wonder of our faith. Just as the disciples experienced Jesus, so too we can experience Him now.

The amazing thing is that we are at no disadvantage whatsoever in our experience of Jesus compared to the early disciples. Let that sink in. Think of the great apostles like Paul, Peter and John. The same Holy Spirit who lived in them can live in us. Just as they experienced Jesus, so do we when we open our lives to the inner working of the Holy Spirit—to his love, his presence and his power.

The empowering of the Holy Spirit

Jesus gave His disciples strict instructions to wait for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). And so the disciples had to wait in obedience for the day of Pentecost to receive the 'promise of the Father—the Holy Spirit'.

The role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer

There are a number of things the Holy Spirit does in the life of the believer.

The Holy Spirit prepares us for salvation

Jesus said to him: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Jesus also said: "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day" (John 6:44). The Holy Spirit is the one who draws us toward God.

The Holy Spirit seals our salvation

When we come to Christ; when we are born again; when we have come into our new relationship with Jesus, the Holy Spirit seals that experience. When something is sealed, it is protected from decay. To put it another way, the Holy Spirit protects our salvation in Christ. "[He] has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee" (2 Corinthians 1:22). See also: Ephesians 1:13.

The Holy Spirit gives us power

When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we are empowered to live and witness for Jesus in the world. Jesus promised the disciples that they would receive 'power from on high' when the Holy Spirit came. "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

He assures us of our salvation

The greatest assurance we can ever have that we are Christians is through the inner witness of the Spirit. "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Romans 8:16).

He guides us into truth (John 6:13)

Only the Holy Spirit can help us understand God's word and His ways.

"When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come" (John 16:13).

He is our teacher

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (John 14:26).

When we read the Word, the Holy Spirit is like a light that shines on the pages and helps us understand what God is saying to us.

He Glorifies Jesus

"He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you" (John 16:14).

In other words, the Holy Spirit honours Jesus in us, amongst us and through us. It's like the Holy Spirit brings Jesus into our presence. To put it another way, when we allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives, he enlarges our understanding of Jesus. He also does the work of Jesus through us.

He gives us the fruit of the Spirit

When the Holy Spirit lives within us, He reflects the nature of Jesus through us. When we are filled with the Spirit, the natural outflow is the fruit of the Spirit

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law" (Gal 5:23).

He helps us in our prayer life

"Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words" (Romans 8:26). When we pray, the Holy Spirit draws alongside us and helps us pray according to the will of God. In our own strength we are not able to pray 'as we ought'. (We will discuss this in a separate chapter when we discuss praying in the Spirit.

He helps us worship

Jesus said to the woman at the well: "But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him" (John 4:23).

Only the Holy Spirit can bring true honour to the name of Jesus. The only way that we can adequately worship God is through the help of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit helps us in our fight against the enemy, the devil

Christians are in a spiritual battle. Paul says: "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12).

"...and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints" (Ephesians 6:18).

The Holy Spirit sanctifies us

Sanctification means becoming more like Jesus. There is no way that we can become more Christ-like in our own strength. But when we surrender to the Holy Spirit, He works within us, shaping and moulding us to become more like Jesus.

"And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11).

"For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified" (Heb 10:14).

Notice that the apostle says: 'are being sanctified'. Salvation is immediate; sanctification is a lifelong process.

Conclusion

Why do people not experience more of the Holy Spirit in their lives? Why do more Christians not experience His power at work in them and through them?

According to Jack Taylor, “to refuse to deal with the Spirit is also a refusal to deal with Jesus, as they are one as well”. So to shy away from the Holy Spirit is to shy away from Jesus. If you want more of Jesus; if you want to know Him more; if you want to feel His presence; if you want to be an effective witness for Him, then it will only happen through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Testimony of Jack Taylor (a pastor)

I close this chapter with a testimony of a man who had been a pastor for many years, yet never really encountered the Holy Spirit in a meaningful way. “Ultimately, in His [the Holy Spirit] faithfulness the Searching Stranger tracked me down and tore the religious mask from my face—and I was exposed before Him. The result was that my whole church was...plunged into a spiritual transition that made us dizzy with excitement”. (Spirit, Word, Power by RT Kendal).

Let me encourage you again to open your heart and mind to the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. Allow Him to fill you with His presence and power, equipping you in every way to serve the King of Kings.

CHAPTER

02

**THE WORK OF THE
HOLY SPIRIT
IN SALVATION**

Without the Holy Spirit, man cannot know God, because God is Spirit. The only way that man can have a relationship with God is by the help of the Holy Spirit. But the problem is that man is born spiritually dead.

This may sound harsh, but it is a fact. Natural man cannot have a relationship with God without the Holy Spirit. He may believe in God; he may pray, read his Bible and go to church, but without the Holy Spirit, it is impossible for him to have a relationship with God, who is Spirit.

The Bible says that we are 'dead in our trespasses and sins' (Colossians 2:13). That means that we are dead to the things of God. We are dead to true spiritual life. The Bible tells us that the entire human race is tainted with sin, because our original father, Adam, sinned. "For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners" (Romans 5:19). Sin cuts us off from God. "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

The Holy Spirit wakes us up

If man is 'dead in his trespasses and sins' (Colossians 2:13), how does he wake up? How does his dead spirit come to life? How does he come to the realization that he is cut off from God in the first place?

If you don't know you are lost, you won't be asking for directions, would you? There must be the realization that you are lost before you make enquiries how to find the way.

Perhaps a good example is to compare man's spiritual deadness to someone drowning. Some years ago I experienced just that. Whilst swimming in the sea I got into difficulties. I tried my hardest to swim to shore; the current was too strong for me. It began to dawn on me that I was in serious difficulty. Do I put my hand up and wave for help? I tried again to swim to shore, but it was useless. Besides, I was getting tired. Finally, I frantically waved my arm in the air to attract the attention of the lifesavers. Eventually they saw my hand and came to my rescue.

But what interested me when I reflect back on that event, was how it took me a while to admit that I was in trouble. At what point do you admit that you are in trouble and you need help?

To me, that is such a wonderful picture of man's predicament. There comes a realization that they are cut off from God; that they do not have a personal relationship with him. There is no connection. They are spiritually dead.

How do we know that we are in spiritual trouble? How do we know that we are drowning in the sea of sin? The Holy Spirit brings us to a realization that we are in serious trouble. It is through him that we realize we are lost and disconnected from God.

It is the Holy Spirit who opens our eyes to our sinfulness. He wakes us up to the fact that we are sinners and cut off from God. And only the Holy Spirit can help us understand that. A dead man doesn't put up his hands and say: 'I'm dead. Please wake me up!'

The Bible says that 'the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick' (Jeremiah 17:9). Therefore, a wicked and corrupt heart will never know or admit that it is sinful. Only the Holy Spirit can cause a dead person to know that he is dead and cut off from God. Only the Holy Spirit can bring us to the realization that we are cut off from God.

If it were left to us, we would never put up our hands and say we are in trouble; we need God.

Jesus taught the very same thing. He said: "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live" (John 5:25).

The question is, how can a dead person hear the word of Christ? The Holy Spirit opens his spiritual ears to hear the word of God. The Bible says that 'faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ' (Romans 10:17). The "dead" person hears the word of Christ when the Holy Spirit opens his ears.

That is why Jesus said: "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him" (John 6:44). So how does the Father draw someone? How does He help him understand that he is dead in his sin; cut off from God?

The Holy Spirit impresses upon him that he is a sinner, cut off from God. The Holy Spirit helps him see that he is in a swirling sea, swimming to get to the shore, but is unable to.

Christians often say that they found the Lord. Wrong! The Lord found them.

We often hear testimonies of how people came to faith in Christ. They will say something like: 'I was seeking truth about God and tried various faiths.' The question is, what (father who) made them seek truth? What made them realize that they needed God? It was the Holy Spirit.

Listen to any Christian testimony, then backtrack to the moment when they first became interested in spiritual matters; when they first felt the need to turn to God. In every situation, without exception, you will find a point of departure; a moment or a time when God touched them in some way. It may have been through a Sunday school teacher. It may have been through a parent. Perhaps it was at a Christian gathering where they first heard the gospel being preached. Whatever it was, it was God the Holy Spirit beginning His work of waking them up to the fact that they were lost and needed God in their lives.

You will often find that over time, the Holy Spirit orchestrated events in their lives that brought them to the place where they opened themselves up to the truth of the gospel, reached out to God and came to faith in Christ. Christ always finds us.

He came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). And the way He does it is through the person of the Holy Spirit.

The work of regeneration

So to get back to the example of the dead person. He needs to be revived; he needs to be woken up so that he can see and understand that he is in spiritual trouble. The Bible calls this regeneration. "But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour 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" (Titus 3:4,5).

Regeneration has to take place before a person can become aware that he/ she is lost. Only when a person is regenerated, can repentance take place. Unless your heart is awakened to the fact that you are a sinner, cut off from God, you will never cry out for salvation. "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). The Holy Spirit opens our ears to the word of Christ.

We have a wonderful example of this when thousands gathered at the Feast of Pentecost (after the death and resurrection of Jesus) to hear Peter preach the first Christian Gospel message. At some point in Peter's sermon there was a dramatic response. "Now when they heard this (the gospel) they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). What cut them to the heart? What convinced them that they were sinners, cut off from God? The Holy Spirit. How did their hearts open up to the truth of the gospel? It was the Holy Spirit. That is exactly what Jesus taught the disciples: the Holy Spirit 'convicts the world of sin' (John 16:8). The Holy Spirit convinces us that we are in trouble, cut off from God and in need of salvation.

This is how it works. The Holy Spirit works in our hearts. He prepares our hearts to hear the truth. "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). And remember, the only way we can hear Christ, is when the Holy Spirit opens our ears. The only way that we can realize that we are dead, is when the Holy Spirit opens our eyes and helps us see that we are dead. When we hear the gospel, the Holy Spirit opens our heart to truth and reality. He awakens us to our 'lostness'. When we realize that we are lost and cut off from God, we reach out to God, and like these early Christians, we cry out and say: "God save me".

The new birth

Let's take this to the next level. A prominent leader in the time of Jesus came up to Him and asked how he could have eternal life. Jesus answered him and said that he must be born again. "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Then Jesus went on to tell him how this actually happens. Jesus said: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). There it is. You must be born of the Spirit. Only the Holy Spirit can bring you to new life in Christ. "Even when we were dead in our trespasses, [Christ] made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—" (Ephesians 2:5).

Here's the process: the Holy Spirit brings us to a realisation that we are sinners and cut off from God. We hear the word of God and reach out in faith. When we put our faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit brings our dead spirit to life. "And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses" (Colossians 2:13).

At that point the Holy Spirit performs divine surgery. The Bible says: "And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26). That is where we are given our new nature. The old sinful self (Adam) is cast out and the new man is born within us. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come" (2 Corinthians 5:17). And all of this is through the inner working of the Holy Spirit.

This is a divine transaction. When you call out in faith, when you cry out as the Jews did at Pentecost, God reaches in to your life and makes the divine exchange—an old sinful heart for a new heart; a heart after God. That's why the Bible says that 'with the heart you believe'.

The gift of the Holy Spirit at conversion

The wonderful thing is that when you come to faith in Christ, you are given the gift of the Holy Spirit. Let's go back to the story of what happened at Pentecost. When the people cried out 'what must we do to be saved?' Peter replied: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

The moment we turn to Christ in faith, we are given the Holy Spirit. There is no way that we can be united with Christ without the Holy Spirit coming into us. If you read on in Acts chapter 2, you will note that these brand new believers were made part of the church. "So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:41,42).

Sealed by the Holy Spirit

Another wonderful work that the Holy Spirit does for us in our conversion is to seal our salvation. We are living in an age when most people understand what it means to 'seal a deal'. Whether you are buying a car or a house, you sign a contract. Once you sign the deal, it is a 'done deal'. Your deal is protected by law.

The same happens when we come to faith in Christ. At conversion we are given the gift of the Holy Spirit. Then the Holy Spirit seals our salvation. To put it another way, the Holy Spirit protects our salvation from being taken away. "In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory" (Ephesians 1:13,14).

Notice that once you are sealed with the Holy Spirit, you are guaranteed your inheritance in God. In other words, all the promises of God, including eternal life, are guaranteed by the Holy Spirit. But may I caution you that this is not a feeling; it is a fact, based on the word of God. It is God's promise to you that you are His forever!

Speaking to the church at Corinth, Paul says that Christ "has anointed us, and has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee" (2 Corinthians 1:21,22).

CHAPTER

03

**CHRISTIAN
ASSURANCE**

Can a Christian have an assurance of salvation?

Can one know without a shadow of doubt that one is saved; that one has been washed and made clean by the inner working of the Holy Spirit? According to the Bible and Christian experience, we can have full assurance that we are saved.

How do we know for sure that we are God's children?

There are those who may get complete assurance of their salvation at conversion, but judging from experience, almost all people seem to get their assurance at a later stage in their journey of faith.

Two ways of knowing that we are saved

The first form of assurance of salvation is through the Word of God. The Word is testimony that God is true. Faith means taking God at His word. If you have come to faith in Christ, then put your trust in God's word that you are a child of God. The Holy Spirit will witness in your heart that what God's word says is true. The Bible says: "By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible" (Hebrews 11:3).

The Word of God is the God-breathed Word. The Bible is inspired by the Holy Spirit. "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). When we approach the Bible like that, then it will have a powerful impact on our lives.

Let's take a moment and look at a few scriptures that assure us that our sins have been forgiven and that we are children of God:

"As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12).

"Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool" (Isaiah 1:18).

"But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12).

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin" (John 1:7).

Another way of looking at the Bible is to see it as God's last will and testament. If our assurance of salvation was taken into a court of law, and the Bible was used as the 'last will and testament' to witness on our behalf that we are innocent, we would be acquitted and completely vindicated. The last will and testament of God will be accepted by the judge that what it says is true. Looking at all the evidence of the Word, he would have to conclude that your sins are forgiven through the blood of Jesus Christ and that you are a son or daughter of God. The Bible says: "God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfil it?" (Numbers 23:19).

Adopted as a child

According to the Bible, when we come to faith in Christ, we are adopted into God's family. "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12).

The apostle Paul says: "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" (Romans 8:15).

Adoption as sons and daughters

Unfortunately, when most of us hear the word adoption, we automatically think that it's not real because it's not biological. Generally we see adoption as being inferior and therefore we do not see the son or daughter as a 'real' son or daughter.

When Paul wrote his letter to the church in Rome, adoption had a much deeper significance. When a boy was adopted into a family under Roman law, he was given full rights as a son. To adopt a son was to make him literally your son who would become heir to all of your wealth, possessions and privileges.

In adoption all previous relationships are severed. The new father exercises authority over the new son, and the new son enters into the privileges and responsibilities of the natural son. That is exactly what the Bible teaches. "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12).

As Christians, you and I have the legal right (according to the Word of God) to be fully sons and daughters of God.

The great English preacher, Charles Spurgeon, put it like this: "If you believe in Jesus Christ you are saved; the best evidence that you are saved lies in the assurance of the word of God that every believer has eternal hope". R.T. Kendal tells the story of being present in a court in America when a boy was being adopted by a family. As the process came to an end, the judge looked up at the parents and said to them, "This paper binds this boy to you as a son forever. He may become a rebel; he may get sick; he may not do well at school, but he is your son."

But I must point out that one is not using the word of God coldly, as a piece of legal paper to prove your sonship. Let's go back to the courtroom scene. Let's say that your sonship is being challenged in court. But in this case, you not only have the papers to prove it, but your actual father is present in court, testifying that you are his son (or daughter). That is exactly what the Holy Spirit does with the Word of God. The Word of God is not just a cold, legal document; it is God's word, witnessed to by the Holy Spirit. "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword" (Hebrews 4:12). How is it 'living and active'? By the witness of the Holy Spirit.

I would encourage you to take some time and meditate on the scriptures that talk about sonship; that talk about God's forgiveness of sins and our standing with Him. Allow the Holy Spirit to wash over your life with His Word. Humbly accept His word and allow the Holy Spirit to let the truth of God's word sink deep into your soul, assuring you that you are indeed a son or daughter of God.

Through the immediate and direct witness of the Spirit

Then there is a second way that we are assured of our salvation. It is, if you like, a deeper assurance that comes directly from the Holy Spirit. It is the 'witness of the Spirit Himself'.

Earlier in this chapter I quoted the following scripture: "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" That is the Word telling us that we are sons and daughters of God. But the scripture goes on: "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Romans 8:16).

The Holy Spirit literally stands within you

But there is a 'higher witness' that God wants you to enjoy as a Christian, and that is the witness of the Spirit; when the Holy Spirit literally stands within you and gives you complete assurance that you have been forgiven your sins and are a child of God.

If you have ever been in love, or ever experienced a deepening of a friendship, you will know that there comes a moment in your relationship where there is a deeper connection; there is a meeting of two souls. You know you are in love. It is something that goes deeper than words and beyond looks. That is what happens when the Holy Spirit witnesses within us. He gives us a deep connection with God, and we know deep within that we are his children.

Imagine that something great happened to you and you were trying to convince people about it. Perhaps you scored a hole-in-one in golf. If you were to tell people that you scored a hole-in-one, would they really believe you? But if someone witnessed you hitting a hole-in-one, he could stand up and say: "I was there. John really hit a hole-in-one. It is true". Imagine what that does for you.

In the same way, God the Holy Spirit stands as witness to my salvation. The Holy Spirit literally testifies within me that the cross is real; that Jesus died for my sins; that my sins are cancelled; that Christ loves me unconditionally. The Holy Spirit is a perfect and reliable witness.

The witness is immediate and direct

The witness of the Spirit is immediate and direct. It's like switching a light on. When you put a light on, you don't stand in the dark waiting for the room to light up. The instant you flick the switch the light comes on and floods the room. Even if you are using a lamp, it may take a few more seconds, but then the room lights up.

The Holy Spirit witnesses to the death and resurrection of Jesus

How do we know that Christ died and rose again? Yes, there is hard, historical evidence to prove that it really happened. The resurrection has never been disproved in two thousand years. But what really makes the cross and resurrection real to me? The Holy Spirit. He witnesses to me that the death and resurrection of Jesus is real.

People are not passionate about Jesus Christ just because the resurrection can be factually proved (although that evidence is very important for a sceptical world). They are passionate because the Holy Spirit witnesses within them that Christ really died for their sins and rose again victorious over sin and death and that through him we have forgiveness of sins. John says that "Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us" (1 John 3:24). The Holy Spirit is absolutely truthful. He testifies within us that we are saved; that we are cleansed from all our sin.

So there are the two ways of being assured of our salvation: through the infallible Word of God and through the Holy Spirit. If you have not had a direct witness in your spirit that you are a child of God, I would encourage you to persevere and open yourself to allow the Holy Spirit to meet with you and assure you that you are saved. Ask Him to give you the assurance that 'you know, that you know, that you know'.

In closing, let me share my own journey with you. I had a powerful encounter with Christ at the age of 17. It was what people call a 'Damascus Road' experience. The morning after my encounter with Christ, I knew that I had been changed; that I was indeed born again. No one had to tell me that I was a new person and that I had been washed clean from my sin.

But a few years later, when I went to University to train for the ministry, I got hooked up with the philosophy of religion. I was more interested in arguing about religion than experiencing Christ. I lost my initial passion for Jesus.

But then the year after leaving University, God graciously sent someone my way who prayed for me to be baptised with the Holy Spirit. That turned my life around! Christ came back to the centre of my life; the Word became all-important to me again and my assurance of salvation returned.

For me, the two witnesses go hand in hand. The more I soaked myself in the word and prayer, the more the Holy Spirit worked within me, bringing me to a place of complete assurance of my salvation.

The more I allowed the testimony of God's Word to shape my thinking about salvation, the more convinced I became that I was indeed a child of God. As I received the truth of God's word that I had been washed clean from my sin, the more secure I became in my relationship with God. So at the end of the day, it's the Word and the Spirit working together to assure me of my salvation.

My encouragement to you is that if you don't have a deep assurance of your salvation, go through the scriptures that speak about sonship. Allow the word of God to soak your spirit, assuring you of your salvation.

Allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you about what the Word says about your position in God's family as His child. The Holy Spirit gives us a witness that what we are reading is God's infallible truth.

Ask Him to give you an assurance within that you are a child of God; that you will know it firsthand within your heart. That is your inheritance as a child of God; believe it and pursue it!

CHAPTER

04

**THE BAPTISM OF
THE HOLY SPIRIT**

Introduction

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is a distinct experience in the life of a believer. Just as being born again is a definite experience, so is the baptism of the Spirit. Many people refer to the baptism of the Spirit as a second experience, because most people receive it after their conversion. That does not mean to say that one cannot be baptized in the Spirit at the time of conversion. But experience shows that this is the exception rather than the rule.

Did the disciples have the Holy Spirit before the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost? Let's take a moment to find out. Jesus spent three years teaching and training the disciples. He poured His life into them. Before His death, He said to them: "And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).

Then something very interesting took place after His resurrection. When Jesus met with His disciples after His resurrection, "He breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'" (John 20:22). That is a clear indication that they were born of the Spirit before the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost. That does not mean that they were completely filled with the Spirit. It does however help us understand that when they were filled with the Spirit at Pentecost, they were already believers; they were already disciples of Jesus Christ.

The necessity of the baptism of the Spirit

I personally don't believe that the baptism of the Spirit is an option in the Christian faith. Jesus actually commanded the disciples to wait until "they were clothed with power from on high". It was a command, not a suggestion.

Many people seem to think that the baptism of the Spirit is a 'higher level' in the Christian journey, and therefore not for everyone. It is not an added extra in our faith. Jesus commanded his disciples "to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24: 49). "And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, 'you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now'" (Acts 1:4-5). That is a pretty clear directive from Jesus to the disciples. Jesus went on to say: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

You shall receive power

When you look at the language used by Jesus to describe the baptism of the Spirit, you realize how important the baptism is for believers. Jesus likened it to being properly clothed. "And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:49).

That is something with which we can all identify. When we put on a jacket or a coat, we are very aware it. We can feel the jacket on our body. That is the way Jesus wanted His disciples to understand what would happen when they received the baptism in the Spirit.

It would be like getting dressed; it would be like putting on a coat or a jacket. One gets the impression that being baptized in the Spirit is like being covered by the Holy Spirit. Any normal person would not go outdoors without getting dressed.

In the same way, Jesus says that if we are going out into the world to witness and live for Him, then we need to be properly dressed.

The Holy Spirit comes upon you

The language of the Bible tells us something of the way the baptism happens. Jesus says: "...when the Holy Spirit has come upon you..." (Acts 1:8). Something very definite takes place. The Holy Spirit comes upon us, just like someone putting a coat on us.

Baptism of the spirit in the Acts of the Apostles

On the day of Pentecost, the disciples (about 120) were gathered in the upper room in obedience to the command of Jesus "to wait for the promise of the Father"(Acts 1:4).

As they were gathered together in the upper room for prayer, and out of obedience to Christ, the Holy Spirit came in a most dramatic way.

“And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance”(Acts 2:4).

There are three distinct things that took place at in the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost. First, the Holy Spirit rested upon each of them in the form of fire. Second, they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and third, they began to speak in tongues. And that is the general way that people are baptized in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes upon them and very often there is an outward expression of the overflow of the Spirit in them, very often causing people to speak in tongues.

Further evidence of people being baptized in the Spirit in the New Testament

The prophet Joel prophesied: “I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions”(Joel 2:28). Once the Spirit had been poured out on the disciples, many people experienced what the disciples experienced. Let’s take a look at some of these experiences.

The apostles at Jerusalem heard that the people in Samaria had received the word of God, but they had not been baptized in the Holy Spirit, so they sent Peter and John to investigate for themselves (Acts 8:14).

"[The disciples] came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for He had **not yet fallen on** any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit" (Acts 8:17). Although there is no report of the disciples speaking in tongues, there was obviously some manifestation, because Simon Magus "saw" some manifestation. "Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money" (Acts 8:18).

On another occasion we read the story of how the Holy Spirit was poured out on the gentile Christians. There was a devout man of God by the name of Cornelius who lived in Caesarea. In a vision one day, he heard God instructing him to call Peter the Apostle to come and speak to them. As Peter was preaching, "the Holy Spirit fell on all those who heard the message for they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God" (Acts 10:46).

Here again we see the double-action of the Spirit coming upon the people, and the outward manifestation of them speaking in tongues and praising God. Perhaps the best way of understanding this is to imagine that our heart is like a great water jar. The Holy Spirit is poured out onto us, filling us like a jar, and we overflow with the Spirit.

Then there was the time when the apostle Paul travelled to Ephesus. On arriving there, he found about twelve disciples. "And he said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' And they said, 'No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit'" (Acts 19:2).

Here is another example of believers who had not been baptized in the Holy Spirit. "And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying" (Acts 19:6). Note again how the Spirit comes upon them, filling them and then flowing out of them in tongues and praise to God.

As you can see from these accounts, the baptism of the Spirit is a very definite experience in the life of believers where the Holy Spirit comes upon them. It is unmistakable. When a person is baptized in the Holy Spirit, they know that something has happened to them. For some it may be like a raging torrent released within them; to others it may be quieter, gentler release of the spirit in them. Whichever one it is, the person will know something has happened to him/her. What will happen, however, is that the person will have a greater love for Jesus. There will be a deeper assurance of faith. They will experience a greater joy in worship and above all, a new power to witness for Jesus.

The gift of tongues

The next question we need to discuss is the gift of tongues. Unfortunately there is a lot of confusion and misunderstanding about speaking in tongues. Many Pentecostals believe that the initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues. Yet Jesus specifically said that the primary evidence of being baptized in the Spirit is power to witness for Him. "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Tongues as a prayer and praise language

The gift of tongues is a very special gift. In most of the instances that I have quoted about the baptism of the Holy Spirit in Acts, almost in every instance the people spoke in tongues, prophesied and praised God.

Let's revisit the first outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost. "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4). A modern version of this text says: "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit, and they began to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them" (Acts 2:4)

Notice that the Holy Spirit 'gave them 'utterance' or 'enabled them'. In other words, the Holy Spirit enabled them to speak in an unknown language. And the miracle is that the people gathered at the feast heard them speaking in their own language. This was their testimony:

"we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God" (Acts 2:11). And what were the "mighty works"? Surely that Jesus was indeed the promised Messiah; that He died for their sins, rose again on the third day and was alive.

In subsequent situations in Acts, people spoke in tongues, but it was unintelligible; no one understood what they were saying.

But what was common in almost every occurrence of the baptism in the spirit was that the people prophesied and praised God.

My testimony

Allow me at this point to share my testimony of how I was baptized in the Holy Spirit. At the age of 17 I had a very dramatic and powerful encounter with Christ. At the time of this encounter, I was a rebel and in very serious trouble. But when I surrendered my life to Christ, I was instantly born again. My life dramatically turned around. I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that I was born again.

Not long afterwards I had an equally powerful encounter with the Lord on my way home from work one day. I felt God strongly impressing upon me that I was to enter the full time ministry and be a preacher.

After my military service in the Navy, I started studying to be a preacher. At the age of 21 I was given my first church to pastor. After two years I was sent to University to continue my studies in theology. And this is where things went a bit pear-shaped. I got too caught up in the academic side of theology and slowly drifted into being a liberal theologian. I no longer believed that God's Word was fully inspired. I neglected my prayer life. I didn't read much of God's Word. I stopped depending on the Holy Spirit to empower me for my daily walk with Christ. I did not pray much. Gradually I lost my passion for Christ.

In my first appointment as a minister after Varsity, I struggled desperately. I had a degree in theology, but my life was without power and deep Christian conviction. I was just a minister talking about God and going through religious rituals. There was very little passion for Christ.

At the end of that year I was sent to a new church. And this is where things changed dramatically! A well-known preacher once said: 'God fixes a fix to fix you'. Well God had a 'fix' in mind for me.

An evangelist had been invited to visit our church prior to my coming. When he arrived I thought he was a right off. He played the guitar and sang simple choruses. In my 'sophisticated mind', I felt it was all a bit simple and childish.

He stayed in our home for the next three days. We had some great conversations about God and life in general. But what impressed me most was his passion for Jesus. When he preached, he exuded the love of Christ.

On the last night he preached in our church, he gave his usual call for salvation and invited people up to the front for prayer. My wife went forward to renew her commitment to Christ and I went up to support her. Before the evangelist started praying for each person, he announced that he would be praying for three categories of people: those who wanted to commit their lives to Christ for the first time; those who wanted to renew their commitment to Christ, and finally, those who wanted to be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Up to that point I was not conscious that I needed the baptism of the Spirit or even wanted it. Nevertheless, when he came to me, he asked me to put out my hands in a gesture of receiving a gift. He then put his hand on my shoulder and prayed: "Lord Jesus, please baptize Malcolm in the Holy Spirit." No one could have prepared me for what followed. I felt that I had been bathed from head to toe. The presence of the Holy Spirit was tangible!

That was the beginning of a whole new life in the Spirit for me. My preaching came alive again. I began to see the Bible with new eyes and my personal worship soared to new heights. I had been baptized in the Spirit! And the amazing thing is that I don't even remember desiring baptism of the Spirit. But God in His mercy tracked me down and arranged for me to have Gary in my home and in my church at a time when I desperately needed the Holy Spirit in my life.

Speaking in tongues

But now I had a problem. What about speaking in tongues? For years I heard people say that when you are baptized in the Spirit you spoke in tongues. But I didn't want to speak in tongues. I thought that people who spoke in tongues were weird. But one thing I was sure of, I had a wonderful new power in my life and a fresh passion to serve Christ.

I began to wrestle with the issue of tongues. I read books on it. I listened to teachings on it. Then I came to the conclusion that I could be baptized in the Spirit and not speak in tongues, since the evidence of the baptism of the Spirit is power and not tongues. Right!

Three months later, when I had settled the issue of tongues, as I lay in bed one night, I felt myself saying 'thank you Jesus'. And as I said that, a new language burst forth in my head, accompanied by a melody. I stopped and tried again. There it was. A fluent unknown language, with a melody! And by the way, I dared not open my mouth. I would have frightened the daylight out of my wife (and probably myself as well!)

The next morning I got up and thought about the previous night. Was I dreaming? Was it a figment of my imagination? But I knew that whatever it was, I had to test it. So I went up to our church, closed all the doors and windows. I took a deep breath, opened my mouth and a new language flowed. It was like turning a tap on! Then I stopped. This was amazing! I tried again. There it was. A new language, with a melody; a full package deal!

The first major benefit for me was the tremendous sense of being spiritually built up—what the Bible calls edification; a building up and strengthening of our spirit. And that’s what the Bible says: “But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit” (Jude 1:20).

Two types of speaking in tongues

At this point I want to point out that there are two kinds of speaking in tongues. The one, as I have shared above, is a prayer language. It is very personal. It is an unintelligible language. The person speaking in tongues does not know what he is saying. It is the language of the Spirit.

For me, it is like a short circuit between the brain and the heart. It is the heart (one’s own spirit) communicating with God through the spirit. Although you don’t understand what you are praying, your heart is deeply connected with God. That is how Paul described it: “The one who speaks in a tongue builds himself up, but the one who prophesies builds up the church” (1Co 14:4).

Baby language

To put this in a context of human life, think of what happens between parent and baby. Although the baby does not yet speak an intelligible language, it nevertheless communicates with gurgles and splutters. Although the parents do not understand this 'baby talk', they are certainly communicating with their baby.

That is something of what Paul means. "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray. But the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express" (Romans 8: 26). To the Corinthians he says: "For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit"(1 Corinthians 14:2).

Let's look at another analogy. When I was in the navy, I worked in the signals corps. We would constantly get coded messages from around the world. We never had a clue what they meant, but when they reached their destination, they were decoded into plain language. In the same way, when I pray in my heavenly language, it passes right under the nose of our enemy, Satan. He has no clue what I'm saying because it is the language of the Spirit. And because he is a fallen creature, he has no clue what I am saying.

I am connecting with my Father without the enemy knowing what I am praying or saying, because it is spirit (small s) to Spirit (capital S)—my spirit to the Spirit of God.

And this to me is the wonder of speaking in tongues. I don't understand what I am saying or praying, but I know that I am connecting with God at a very deep level—spirit to Spirit. And through the Spirit, God breaks through on my behalf. When I don't know how to pray for someone or a situation, I pray in tongues and the Holy Spirit helps me by praying in and through me. Paul says: "For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit" (1 Corinthians 14:2).

To praise unhindered

Have you ever felt like there are no more words to truly praise and bless God? When you pray in tongues you do not have that problem. "The Spirit helps us in our weakness" (Romans 8: 26). As I said earlier, we pray mysteries in the Spirit (1 Corinthians 14:2). Paul says: "I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also" (1 Corinthians 14:15).

Public tongues

The second type of speaking in tongues is a prophetic message in an unknown language. Usually the person speaking in tongues in a Christian gathering does not know what he is saying. But when the Spirit prompts a person to speak in tongues publicly, there is usually someone present who has the gift of interpretation and can speak out the message that God wants to impart to the people.

"Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up" (1 Corinthians 14:5).

Conclusion

Many Christians seem to be content with paddling around in the shallows when they could be carried along in the River of God. Too many Christians are living without power. Their journey with Christ is mediocre. Jesus promised that we would "receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon us".

Jesus said: "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'out of his heart will flow rivers of living water'" (John 7:37).

Jesus invites us to come to Him. He is the baptizer in the Spirit. As we humble ourselves before Him and ask Him to baptize us in the spirit, I believe He will. Or, on the other hand, ask one of your leaders at church to pray for you. I believe it's there for the asking.

Jesus said: "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will our heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:13).

CHAPTER

05

GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

Introduction:

The gifts of the Spirit are God's provision to strengthen the church and equip her for her mission to the world. In very simple terms, the gifts are the expression of God's grace through ordinary believers through the inner working of the Holy Spirit.

The gifts of the Spirit have two purposes

Firstly, the gifts are God's provision for strengthening and maturing the church for its mission to touch the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. For this reason Paul says, "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good" (1 Cor. 12:7).

When the gifts of the Spirit are functioning in a church, you can be sure that the church will be vibrant and healthy. Through the ministry of the gifts of the Spirit, believers are strengthened in their faith, who in turn strengthen other believers.

Secondly, through the gifts of the Spirit, believers are able to witness effectively for Jesus in the world. Jesus said, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses throughout the world" (Acts 1:8). Our witness is not only one of talking about Jesus, but one of demonstrating His life to the world. And the only way that is possible is by the empowering of the Holy Spirit.

The apostle Paul was very aware that it was the power of the Holy Spirit that enabled him to have an effective ministry. Addressing the Corinthian church, he reminds them that he did not come to them “with eloquence or superior wisdom ... [but] in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power.” (1 Cor. 2:1-5).

The operation of the gifts is supernatural. It is literally God working by His Spirit through very ordinary people, like you and me. The reason why we are gifted by the Holy Spirit is for us to be channels of God’s grace to One another in the church and to the world. For that reason, Paul strongly urges the church to “earnestly desire the spiritual gifts” (1 Corinthians 14:1 ESV). As you study the gifts of the Spirit, you will hopefully begin to understand why Paul was so eager for the church to desire them; they are the lifeblood of the church, for its own health and for an effective ministry to the world.

What are the gifts of the spirit?

The gifts of the Spirit are literally gifts of God’s grace, expressed by His Spirit through ordinary, fallible people. The gifts are the expression of God’s love and grace to one another and to the world. The word charismatic comes from two Greek words: charis(grace) and mata(gifting). In a sense, every Christian is charismatic because if you are born of the Spirit, you will be filled with the grace of God which expresses itself through the gifts of the Spirit.

There are four places in the New Testament that speak about the gifts of the Spirit: 1 Corinthians 13 and continued in chapter 14; Romans 12; Ephesians chapter 4 and 1 Peter chapter 4.

Although I will be concentrating on the nine gifts of the spirit spoken of in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14, let me collate the gifts from the four passages mentioned above.

Below is a list of the gifts mentioned by Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 12.

The nine gifts mentioned in Corinthians:

- Wisdom
- Knowledge
- Faith
- Healing
- Miracles
- Prophecy
- Discerning of spirits
- Tongues
- Interpretation of tongues

Romans chapter 12 (7 primary gifts):

- Prophecy
- Service
- Teaching
- Exhorts
- Contributes (giving)
- Leads
- Acts of mercy

1 Peter chapter 4:

Prophecy (speaking the oracles of God)

Serving

Ephesians chapter 4:

Apostles

Prophets

Evangelists

Pastors

Teachers

I am going to confine myself to the gifts of the Spirit spoken about in 1 Corinthians chapter 12.

Jesus full of grace

It may surprise you that Jesus depended upon the empowering of the Holy Spirit for his life and ministry. And because Jesus constantly lived in the Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit were a natural expression of the grace of God through Him. I am always amazed that believers try and do the work of God in their own strength, when Jesus Himself relied upon the Holy Spirit for His ministry. Surely if Jesus depended on the Holy Spirit for His ministry, what makes us think that we can be effective witnesses for Him without the same empowering of the Holy Spirit?

The apostle John tells us that Jesus was 'full of grace and truth' (John 1:14). He was the embodiment of the grace of God. Whenever He ministered to people it was an expression of God's love and grace working through Him. For example, when He healed someone, it was an expression of God's grace and compassion.

Whenever He performed a miracle, it was the grace and power of God breaking into a natural situation, bringing healing, calming a ferocious storm or feeding a multitude. When Jesus spoke to the woman at the well (John chapter 4), He told her of things about her life that could only be known supernaturally. The ministry of Jesus was supernatural; it was all done through the working of the Holy Spirit.

The question is, if Jesus depended on the Holy Spirit to be a channel of God's grace, then shouldn't we be eager to be filled with the Spirit and become channels of God's grace in the same way? To me it is very simple: if you are filled with the Spirit, surely God is going to express Himself (His grace and favour) through you.

The practical outworking of the gifts of the spirit

How do the gifts of the Spirit work practically? To me it is rather logical. If Jesus is the perfect reflection of the grace of God (which He is), then surely if Jesus lives in us (which He does), then surely His grace will be released through us. Paul says: "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

It stands to reason then that if Christ is in us, there should be an outward expression of His life by the inner working of the Holy Spirit. If Jesus is "full of grace and truth" and He lives within us by the Spirit, then surely His grace is expressed through our lives, touching people in a number of different ways.

As I said earlier, there are two main purposes for the expression of the gifts of the Spirit. Firstly, they help maintain the health of the Body of Christ. Each one of us is a gift to the body of Christ. The apostle Paul likens the Church to a human body. It is a living organism. Just as a human body has many parts, so does the Body of Christ. Paul says, "For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another" (Romans 12:5 ESV). Take note of the end of that text. We are "members of one another". We are organically bound together as brothers and sisters in Christ, in and through the Spirit.

The human body is an excellent way of describing the nature of the church. It is an amazing living organism. Not only is it designed to look after itself, but it can perform many functions that not only enable us to function as believers, but help us care for those around us.

Each of us has a specific function in the church. Each believer is gifted by the Holy Spirit to be a blessing to the Body of Christ. Each believer is able to be a channel through which the Holy Spirit can bring wholeness and vitality to the church. "So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others" (Rom. 12:5).

Then secondly, the Body of Christ is called to reach a broken, dying world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is an awesome task, but God has given the Church everything it needs to partner with Him in reaching the lost and touching a desperate, broken world.

To me it is very much like an army going into battle. Not only do they need suitable equipment, they also need adequate provisions to sustain them during the battle.

That is exactly what the church is all about. We are living in hostile territory. We are called to go into the world with the gospel. And for that we need to be suitably equipped and we need sustenance to stay strong in the battle.

The gifts of the Spirit not only strengthen the Body of Christ, but they are also a means of penetrating enemy lines to effectively open a way for the spread the gospel of Christ.

The gifts of the Spirit are not for the elite

The gifts of the Spirit are not for a few elect people in the Body of Christ. Anyone who is born of the Spirit is able to exercise the gifts of the Spirit. Have a look at the passage below:

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Corinthians 12:4 - 7 ESV).

Notice what Paul says: “it is the same God who empowers them all in **everyone**.” That means that everyone who is born of the Spirit is able to be a channel of the Spirit for the good of the church as well as effective witnesses in the world.

Further on in his letter to the Corinthians, Paul instructs the church: "When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up" (1 Corinthians 14:26 ESV).

Notice two things:

- 1) Because each person is filled with the Spirit, each one has something to offer to the fellowship through the gifts of the Spirit.
- 2) All things should be done for building up the church.

The example of prophecy

Paul places a very high value on the gift of prophecy. This is his encouragement to the church at Corinth: "Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy" (1 Corinthians 14:1 ESV). You may wonder why he says "especially that you may prophesy". Prophecy is the one gift that is able to strengthen believers in their walk of faith. When people bring a prophetic word, it encourages and strengthens the church. Through prophecy, God is able to speak directly to the church.

What then is prophecy? To put it very simply, prophecy is God speaking to us through anyone who is born of the Spirit. The word prophetes (the Greek word for prophetic) means to speak on behalf of God. That does not mean that when a person is prophesying that he is like God speaking. It simply means that God is using someone to bring a message of encouragement and even direction to the church.

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In no way does the gift of prophecy take the place of scripture. In fact, whenever someone prophesies, the message needs to be in keeping with the word of God; that way we know that it is from God. Paul says: "Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast to what is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:19 - 21).

Another way of describing prophecy is to say that it is God's "now word" or a "word in season" for the people receiving it. The message itself may not be dramatic or extraordinary in any way, but a word that the believers need to hear at that moment for encouragement, edification and direction.

However, prophecy should not be confined to someone giving a word of prophecy in a meeting. It can also come through the preaching of the word. I have received many "now words" through the preaching of the word and I know many others have had the same experience.

A prophetic word may also come through an utterance in tongues that someone with the gift of interpretation will speak out in plain language (which I will discuss in more detail further on).

According to Paul, prophecy has the power to touch people's lives at a very deep level. "But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you" (1 Corinthians 14:25).

Here Paul is talking about the power of prophecy when it is done God's way. Many unbelievers have testified that when they went to church, someone gave a prophetic word that spoke directly to them and their situation which either opened their heart to receive Christ or, or if they had back-slidden, returned to Him.

Derek Prince describes prophecy like this: "Prophecy is the ability given by the Holy Spirit to speak words in a language understood by the believer but the words are inspired and given supernaturally. It does not proceed from human reasoning or human learning or education or seminary training. Like all the other gifts it is on a supernatural level and it is only made possible by the supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit" (Derek Prince).

Definitions and categories of the gifts

The gifts of the Spirit can be divided into three basic categories.

- Inspirational or fellowship gifts (Power to say)
- Gifts of power (Power to do)
- Gifts of revelation (Power to know)

Inspirational or fellowship gifts (Power to say)

Prophesying in Tongues

Earlier on we saw that when the apostles prayed for people for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, many of them spoke in tongues. The gift of speaking in tongues is the ability given by the Holy Spirit to speak in an unknown language.

This can be a little confusing, but speaking in tongues falls into two categories. Firstly, there is what many people call a 'heavenly language' or a "prayer language". It is literally "the language of the Spirit". It's when my spirit communicates with The Spirit. It is "spirit to Spirit".

When Paul talks about praying in tongues he refers to it as praying in the Spirit. He says, "I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also" (1 Corinthians 14:15 ESV). In this instance, Paul is talking about praying in tongues in his own devotional language.

When someone prays in tongues, they do not understand what they are saying. The Holy Spirit is praying in them and through them. For Paul it was very normal for people who have been baptized in the Spirit to pray in tongues.

"For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit" (1 Corinthians 14:2 ESV).

Prophetic tongues

The second type of tongues is a prophetic utterance in a public meeting. When someone speaks in a prophetic tongue in a meeting it needs to be interpreted into plain language, otherwise the exercise is useless. And that is where the gift of interpretation comes in. Someone who has the gift of interpretation is able to interpret the message in tongues and speak the message out in plain language. If there isn't an interpretation, Paul says that the one who gave the prophecy in tongues must be prepared to give the interpretation. "Therefore, one who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret" (1 Corinthians 14:13).

You may wonder why we need a prophetic message in an unknown language. I don't think there is a simple answer to that; it is mysterious. Yet I have been in meetings when someone has spoken out in a prophetic tongue and I found that as they spoke, I had a message welling up inside of me. I later realized that I had the gift of interpretation.

Perhaps the easiest way to describe this gift is to liken it to a prod, like someone nudging you in the back to move forward. When the person speaks out in a prophetic tongue, someone else is stirred (prodded) by the Spirit. They sense something of what's on the heart of God for the people for that moment. It's almost like a pump that has to be primed with water before it will flow. When someone speaks out in a prophetic tongue in a public meeting, the person with the gift of interpretation is stirred by the Holy Spirit and "hears" the message in his own language, then shares it with the congregation.

Interpretation must not be confused with translation

What confuses some people about this gift of interpretation is that they compare it to the natural skill of language interpretation. It's nothing like that.

The person interpreting the message does not get a verbatim translation of the prophetic word. The person with the ability to interpret tongues picks up the 'emotion' in the heart of God of what He has on His heart for His people at that precise moment.

At the risk of being simplistic, let's do a little role-play and apply this principle to an ordinary human setting. Let's say that you are at a family dinner with everyone sitting around the table. Your father has something weighing on his heart about the family but does not share it.

(Now this is where you have to use your imagination). Two of the children begin to sense that something is very much on father's heart but have no idea of what it can be. Then one of the children is a bit overcome with emotion and begins to speak out, but no one can fully understand what she is saying. As that takes place, one of the other children, also sensing that something is on father's heart, begins to speak out and says: "I think dad wants to say how much he loves us and finds such pleasure in us as a family".

I know that's awfully simplistic, but perhaps it will help you understand what happens in the Spirit at a Christian gathering when the gift of prophetic tongues is exercised.

Now let's put that into the context of a gathering of Christians. Two or three people are stirred (prodded) by the Spirit. God has their attention. They anticipate that something is on the heart of God for the church. Then they step out in faith and speak out in tongues. In the meantime, the person with the gift of interpretation has also been stirred by God and waits in anticipation.

Then when the prophetic tongue is spoken out, the person with the gift of interpretation begins to pick up the message that is on God's heart and speaks out the message in plain language to the gathering.

For the sake of order in the church, Paul gives general guidelines for the ministry of prophecy. "If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret" (1 Corinthians 14:27).

Note what Paul says: 'let two or three' prophesy. There can be up to three prophetic words in tongues, and then the person with the gift of interpretation senses what God is saying, and then shares the message in plain language so that the gathering can understand.

A brief definition of each gift

Prophecy

Prophecy is the ability given by the Spirit to speak a word from God, either to an individual or to a group of people. (See Derek Prince's definition above).

Gifts of power (Power to do)

Healing

The gift of healing is the special ability given through the Holy Spirit to heal the sick.

Miracles

The Greek word for miracles is *energēma*, which literally means 'working of powers'.

A miracle is God's supernatural power breaking into a situation that brings healing and change which could not have happened in the natural. For example, let's say that a person was blind and the doctors could not heal her. But when someone laid hands on her and prayed for healing she could see. That is obviously a miracle.

Faith

Each believer has faith (Rom 12:3). But the gift of faith is a special faith to accomplish miracles. The gift of faith is the assurance given by the Holy Spirit that what the person is praying for is going to take place. If they are praying for someone's healing, they are given the assurance that the person is going to be healed.

A good example is the healing of the cripple by Peter and John. They had walked past that man many times on their way to the Temple. So what was different that day? Faith rose in Peter's heart and he said: "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" (Acts 3:6 ESV). What was the difference? The gift of faith was given by the Holy Spirit to Peter for that situation; a deep assurance that the cripple was going to be healed. That is why Peter could say with assurance "rise up and walk". It was a supernatural, sovereign work of the Holy Spirit.

Gifts of revelation (Power to know)

Discerning of Spirits

The gift of discerning of spirits or distinguishing of spirits is the ability to recognize the operation of evil spirits in people or situations. All born again believers have the ability to discern between good and evil. But the discerning of spirits is a special ability given by the Holy Spirit to understand when specific demonic spirits are at work in people or situations. Michael Eaton puts it this way: "'Discernment of spirits' could refer to a God-given ability to distinguish between the divine and the demonic."

Word of knowledge

A word of knowledge is a specific word from the Holy Spirit giving knowledge about a person's life or a situation that can't be known in the natural. A good example is Jesus' meeting with the woman at the well. The Holy Spirit gave Jesus specific knowledge about the woman's life, which led to her conversion (and a whole city). (John chapter 4).

Word of wisdom

A word of wisdom is the ability to know the mind of God in a given situation. Once again, Christians have wisdom at varying degrees. But the gift of wisdom is discerning the mind of God in a specific situation. The word itself may not be an 'out-of-this-world' word. To the person sharing the word it may seem an ordinary word of wisdom, but to the person or the group receiving it, it's the specific knowledge or wisdom that gives them a breakthrough in their particular situation at that moment.

Conclusion

The dynamic flow of the gifts

The gifts of the spirit are dynamic. In other words, they flow continuously. Everyone can operate in any of the gifts at any given time since they are given by the Spirit. We do not own the gifts; they are freely given by the Holy Spirit to bring life and health to believers and the church.

Paul strongly urges us to 'earnestly desire spiritual gifts' (1 Cor. 14:1). The reason he does that is, as I have stated above, to strengthen the believers in the church and to equip the church for its ministry in the world.

My encouragement to you is this: open yourself up to the person of the Holy Spirit and allow Him to use you as a channel of His grace and mercy to bring about healing and wholeness in His Body, the church, and to make you an effective witness for Christ in the world.