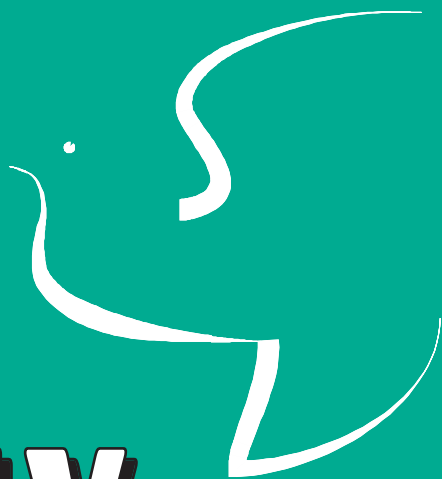


***The***

**HOLY  
SPIRIT**

***at Work***



**H. A. Ironside**

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## THE MISSION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

*“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 depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.” John 16:7-11*

In these verses our Lord Himself depicts the special mission of the Holy Spirit to a lost world. The Spirit’s presence on earth during the present dispensation is declared by Christ to be more important than His remaining here: “It is to your advantage that I go away.” We might naturally have thought that it would have been far better if the Lord could have remained in this scene, going about teaching and instructing men, making known to them the love of God, and declaring the righteousness that men are accountable to render in response to that love. However, we would be wrong, for our Lord Jesus did not come to this world simply as a teacher. He did not come merely to be the great example. He does not save men by His life before the cross; He saves by His death.

Our Savior came into this world to die. He was made a little lower than the angels with a view to the suffering of death. He made this very clear when He said to Nicodemus, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (Jn. 3:14-15). Elsewhere He declared that He came “to give His life a ransom for many” (Mt. 20:28). Yet death had no claim on Him. We are told that “sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death” (Jas. 1:15), but He was the absolutely sinless One.

He was not naturally subject to death. Had He so elected He might have lived on as the Prince of Life – the deathless One. In one sense it was as great a miracle for Him to die as it was to be

raised from the dead. He said, "No one takes it (My life) from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from my Father" (Jn. 10:18). And so it was to our advantage that He go away; and He must go by way of the cross – there to give His life a ransom for many.

Apart from this, it was to our advantage that He go away, that the Comforter might come. If He had remained on earth as He was before His death and resurrection, He would necessarily have been localized. As man, He could not have been in more than one place at one time. When Lazarus was so sick in Bethany, and his sorrowing sisters yearned for Christ's presence, He was some distance away. They sent a message to Him saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick" (Jn. 11:3). But days elapsed before Jesus reached Bethany, and before He arrived Lazarus had died.

If the Lord had remained on earth, He could not have been in Palestine and in America at the same time. He might have gone from place to place all through the years, but millions never would have seen nor heard Him in person. Therefore, it was to our advantage that He should go away, that He should return to heaven. Upon His ascension to the right hand of the Father, He sent down the Holy Spirit, another divine Person of the eternal Trinity, to carry on the work that Christ began. Because the Holy Spirit never took a human body, He can be in every place at one time.

### **To Convict of Sin**

This does not in the slightest degree dim the truth of His personality. In speaking of Him, our Lord uses the masculine pronoun. He constantly refers to "Him" as a divine Person, who as a living Person could do the things that Jesus said He would do. Now what was His special mission to be? Jesus said, "When He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (Jn. 16:8). This is the purpose for which He came into the world.

This word here rendered "convict" is variously translated. The King James Version uses "reprove," and the marginal note

is "convince." It is the special mission of the Holy Spirit to convict, convince, or to reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.

I think that many, when they use the word "convict," have in their minds the producing of a deep emotional experience, intense sorrow and anguish because of sin. I believe this is the way it is generally used. A man attends a gospel meeting, and as his sins are brought before him, he is moved to tears of confession and to a complete breakdown before God. The sorrow accompanying this experience is generally spoken of as "conviction," and some people are troubled because they have never had such an experience; they even question the reality of their conversion to God. While trusting Christ, they have not experienced an emotional period of grief and anguish because of sin.

Far be it from me to make light of such an experience. I would be thankful indeed to see people break down and weep bitterly over their neglect of Christ, their cold-hearted indifference to the gospel, and their selfishness and wickedness. But there may be grief and tears without the conviction of which our Lord speaks here. On the other hand, conviction may be thoroughly genuine where no tear is shed, and where little real anguish of spirit is known. We are not all made alike, nor do all express their convictions in the same way. It would be a mistake, therefore, to limit conviction to an emotional breakdown.

The word "convict" is really a legal term. It has to do with the presentation of evidence that proves wrong-doing. The Spirit of God comes to bring to the minds and consciences of men the great wrong they are doing to God by sinning against Him. Now when this wrong is brought home to a man's conscience and he is really convinced of his evil ways, he will be affected largely according to his disposition, or make-up. Some men are sensitive and easily moved to tears. Others are calm, logical, and perhaps even more deeply convinced than the emotional ones, although they do not show it in the same way. God speaks to man's intelligence. He does not address merely his heart, his soul, his emotional nature. Sentimentality has no place in New Testament evangelism.

In many places various efforts are made to move people to tears and arouse the emotions through the use of sentimental music, stirring testimonies and sad stories. When people break down because of such activities and make a religious confession, they are considered converts. However, one might get exactly the same results by having them watch a worldly motion picture or attend a concert where sentimental songs are sung.

It is the man's judgment that should be convinced; and so the Lord says, "Come now, and let us *reason* together ... though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. 1:18). If God is going to reason with men in a matter of this kind, He must show them what provision He has made to bring about this great end. His Word elsewhere is, "I speak as to wise men; *judge* for yourselves what I say" (1 Cor. 10:15). Indeed, the Holy Spirit's special work is to bring the Word of God to bear upon the minds and consciences of men to convince them of sin, righteousness and judgment.

Of what sins does the Holy Spirit seek to convict men? Did He come from heaven to convict them of trespassing upon the rights of others, or of living an immoral life, or of violating human law? Is it of these sins that the Spirit of God came to convict men? Undoubtedly He will deepen the realization of all sinfulness, but His primary work is not with matters of this kind. Every man's natural conscience convicts him of sins like these. Men may try to excuse acts like these, but they know in their hearts that they are doing wrong when they commit them. In addition to conscience, man has the "fiery law" given at Sinai with its stern "thou shalt nots" (Dt. 33:2; Ex. 20:1-17). This law, which is holy, just and good, makes sin exceedingly sinful, and thus convicts the wrong-doer of his wickedness in violating its precepts.

What then is the sin that the Holy Spirit principally brings to the mind of men? Our Lord tells us, "of sin, because they do not believe in Me" (Jn. 16:9). This is the one great condemning sin which, if not repented of, shuts the door of heaven in a man's face. Listen, my friend, your sins – no matter how great or how many – do not by themselves shut heaven's door to you. And

for this reason, when Christ gave Himself a ransom on the cross, God "laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6). On the cross He completely satisfied the righteous claims of the throne of God, and made perfect propitiation to Divine Justice for all the sins of which men could possibly be guilty. Christ thereby became an available propitiation for the whole world.

If you are ever shut away from the presence of God, it will not be because you came into this world a sinner, nor because Adam sinned and you inherited certain evil tendencies. It will not only be because you yourself have sinned, or been guilty of grave offenses against the laws of God and man, but also because you have deliberately turned away from the way of salvation, and refused the Savior who died that you might live.

Hear His own words in regard to this: "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (Jn. 3:17-18).

This then is the condemnation: God has provided a ransom, but men refuse His mercy, and thus go down to eternal agony because "men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (Jn. 3:19). At judgment day those who refuse Christ must give account to God for their own individual sins. They shall be judged "each according to his works" (Mt. 16:27). On the other hand, if they believe in the Savior God has provided, their sins are put away, and they can look forward with perfect confidence to the day when God will judge the world in righteousness, knowing that their judgment is already passed, for Christ has answered for them.

The work of the Holy Spirit, then, is primarily to show men the enormity of their sin in rejecting Jesus Christ. A man may be guilty of breaking every one of the ten commandments, but if he comes to God in repentance and puts his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, he will find that all his sins have been covered by His atoning work on the Cross, and he may be saved for eternity by simple faith in the One who died for his sins and lives again for his justification. He thus becomes a new creature in Christ –

born of God, and created unto good works – a natural result of the new life communicated to him.

On the other hand, a man's life may be outwardly respectable; he may be a good citizen who refuses to stoop to immoral or dishonorable things. Yet he cannot escape the fact that he has sinned again and again, and is therefore unfit for the presence of God. But the One he has sinned against has provided a Savior for him, and if he rejects that Savior, then there is no forgiveness, either in this world or in the next. The worst sin that any man or woman can be guilty of is to reject the Savior.

Some time ago, a young woman said to me, "You made me feel very uncomfortable tonight. I have never knowingly done a wicked thing. I am respected by my friends. No one can say a word against my character. The only thing that you could object to is that I do not belong to a church, or care anything about Jesus Christ. And yet you class me with people who live wickedly."

I responded, "Suppose you said, 'I have always been good and respectable. Nobody can say anything against me, except that I do not care anything about my mother. Though she is the best mother in the world, I am utterly indifferent to her.' What would you expect me to think of you?"

She exclaimed, "I would not be a very good daughter if I did not love my mother!"

I replied, "I told you tonight of One who has loved you with a love no earthly mother could ever match; One who gave His life to ransom you from a danger your mind cannot possibly realize, and who now asks your trust and confidence – and you boldly say you care nothing about Him! What do you suppose God thinks of such indifference to His Son?"

She hung her head and said, "I never thought of it like that." A few nights later she humbly confessed the Lord Jesus Christ as her own Savior.

Where is the ideal character I have sketched? Where is the man who has never done anything sinful? Who would dare say he has never stooped to what is degrading or dishonorable? D. L. Moody used to say, "Character is what a man is in the dark." If the record of all you have thought or done in the dark were



suddenly flashed upon a wall, how long would you sit there facing it? Remember, sins of the mind are as evil in the sight of God as sins of the flesh. And to all men He has declared, "There is none righteous, no, not one ... There is none who does good, no, not one" (Rom. 3:10,12).

It is for sinners such as these that Jesus died. How fearful the guilt then of the one who rejects or neglects Him, and rushes headlong to the doom that sin deserves!

The great question the Spirit of God now asks is, "What relationship do you have with Him who died on the cross?" The Bible says, "If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ let him be Anathema, Maranatha" (1 Cor. 16:22 KJV). These two untranslated words (one Hebrew, the other Syriac) are evidently put into the text by the Holy Spirit to get our attention. The first means "committed to judgment" or "accursed." The other means, "the Lord cometh." To persist in refusing to trust the Savior, is to be committed to judgment at the Lord's coming.

### **To Convict of Righteousness**

We read that the Holy Spirit has come to convict of righteousness. This is a little more difficult to make clear. When a man realizes his sins, his next thought is, "How can my sins be put away, and how can I obtain a righteousness that allows me to stand without fear in the presence of a holy God?" This is made plain in the gospel: "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed" (Rom. 1:17). It was sin that brought Christ to the cross; but having made full atonement there, having satisfied every righteous claim of the throne of God, righteousness itself demands that He who died shall be raised from the dead, and vindicated of every charge by this resurrection.

And so the righteous One, having suffered once for all upon the cross, has been raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. Triumphant over death, in righteousness He has been seated at God's right hand in heaven. "Of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more" (Jn. 16:10). My sin put the Son of God on the cross, but God's righteousness raised Him from the dead and placed Him, the risen Man, beside the Father in heaven. I have no righteousness in myself,

but as I believe in Jesus as my Savior, the Spirit of God points me to that exalted Man on the throne of the universe and says to me, "On the cross He bore your sin; on the throne He is your righteousness." He who knew no sin was made a sin-offering for us, "that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21).

In my judgment, the finest experiential hymn in the English language is "Jehovah Tsidkenu." It tells of God's dealings with Robert Murray McCheyne, one of the most godly Scotch preachers of the nineteenth century. Though he died at a comparatively young age, he is still held in high regard in Scotland because of his devotion to Christ. Well-brought up and carefully trained, his outward life was without blame. He was in every way respectable, conscientious and well-informed. He knew his Bible, said his prayers, went to church, and was well-satisfied with his own righteousness – forgetting that Scripture has declared, "All our righteousnesses are like filthy rags" in God's sight (Isa. 64:6).

While he was away at school, a message came telling him of the sudden death of his godly, older brother. He went home for the funeral, and asked to be permitted to go alone into the room where his brother's body lay. As he gazed upon the lifeless form, he asked himself this question: "If this were my body, where would my soul be now?" Answering his own question honestly, he admitted, "I would be lost forever." Then he broke down, gave up all his self-righteousness, and found in the risen, glorified Christ that righteousness celebrated in this little hymn.

The words "Jehovah Tsidkenu" mean "The Lord our Righteousness." This is how he told the story:

I once was a stranger to grace and to God;  
I knew not my danger, I felt not my load;  
Though friends spoke in rapture of Christ on the tree,  
*Jehovah Tsidkenu* was nothing to me.

I oft read with pleasure, to soothe or engage,  
Isaiah's wild measure or John's simple page;  
But even when they pictured the blood-sprinkled tree,  
*Jehovah Tsidkenu* seemed nothing to me.

Like tears from the daughters of Zion that roll,  
I wept when the waters went over His soul;  
Yet thought not that my sins had nailed to the tree  
*Jehovah Tsidkenu* – 'twas nothing to me.

When free grace awoke me by light from on high,  
Then legal fears shook me – I trembled to die;  
No refuge, no safety, in self could I see:  
*Jehovah Tsidkenu* my Savior must be.

My terrors all vanished before that sweet name;  
My guilty fears banished, with boldness I came  
To drink at the fountain, life-giving and free:  
*Jehovah Tsidkenu* is all things to me.

Have you learned this lesson? Through the Spirit's teaching, have you seen that you have no righteousness of your own, that all your best deeds are stained with your own sinful nature? Has the Spirit of God directed your eyes to that risen glorified Man at the Father's right hand? Do you realize that He could not be there if He had not completely settled the sin question to God's satisfaction? He made Himself responsible for our sins on the cross, and He could not be in heaven today if He had not put them all away forever.

But there He sits in highest glory, enthroned above all other created things, and He is Himself the righteousness of all who put their trust in Him. This is the righteousness which is of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Paul speaks of this when he says, "That I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith" (Phil. 3:8-9).

Now what about practical righteousness as we go through this world? The power for it comes from having our heart occupied with the risen Christ. The more we behold Him, the more we are changed into His image. The more He fills our soul's vision, the more we live to please Him. For He who is our righteousness is also our life from the moment we believe in

Him; and this life will be made known in holy living. We do not go back to the law's demands for practical righteousness, for that law is "the strength of sin" (1 Cor. 15:56). But Christ risen is the strength of holiness; and as we learn to know Him where He now is, we grow in His likeness from day to day. It is the Holy Spirit's constant aim to occupy us with Christ, that we may walk in the Spirit and not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

### **To Convict of Judgment**

There is something more. The Holy Spirit not only convicts of sin and righteousness, but also of judgment. People often misquote and therefore misunderstand John 16:8 which says, "He will convict the world ... of judgment." They say, "of judgment *to come*," but that is not quite it. That expression was used by Paul as he reasoned with Felix "about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come" (Acts 24:25). Felix trembled, as well he might. But here the point is that the Holy Spirit convinces us of present judgment, for it says, "because the ruler of this world is judged." The world judged Christ as unfit to live, and cried, "Away with Him, crucify Him." But by so doing it has condemned itself.

The prince of this world did his utmost to circumvent God Himself by stirring up his henchmen to demand that Christ be hanged on a tree. It was there that the Seed of the woman had His heel bruised by the serpent; but there the serpent's head was bruised, for by His death Christ nullified Satan's power, and released "those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Gen. 3:15; Heb. 2:15).

Now that God has vindicated Christ, He has declared the whole world under judgment. This judgment has not yet been executed, but it may soon be. It shall be when the Lord is revealed from heaven in flaming fire. Meanwhile, the gospel of God's grace is sent into all the world, and when men receive it in faith, they are brought out from under judgment having passed from death to life, and from the power of Satan to God.

The man of faith sees the whole world with all its pleasures as a judged scene. He learns to look at it as Lot looked at Sodom – a scene exposed to the wrath of God, though not yet executed.

And faith enables him to say with Paul, "God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Gal. 6:14). The man of faith has not only found life through believing in Christ, but he has died with Him to the world that crucified Him, and so he is no longer of the world, though in it, even as He is not of the world.

A young man in the zeal of his new birth in Christ said to an older Christian, "I am glad that I have accepted life through Christ." The older man replied, "That is very good. Now I trust you will also accept death with Him." This was a new thought to the young convert. But as the mature Christian told him of the blessedness of identification with Christ in His rejection, he exclaimed, "I see it now! His death was mine, and I have died with Him to all the pleasures of earth; and now I am to live for Him alone." May the Lord grant that all our hearts may enter into this, for His name's sake!



## THE WITNESS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

There are fewer subjects about which Christians, generally, are so confused as the teaching of Scripture concerning the witness of the Holy Spirit. Many think it an emotional experience, a happy feeling, an ecstatic state of mind, or a vision of some kind, that will do for them what the Word alone cannot do, namely, give them a knowledge of acceptance in Christ. While some such subjective experiences may result from the witness, none alone nor all of them together constitute that witness.

Some years ago I was invited to a certain western city to hold a series of gospel meetings. Each time I went, I was entertained by a godly family, of which the husband and wife were both happy Christians, saved only a few years before. It was always a joy to share Christ with them.

The last time I was at their home, however, I saw that the wife was no longer the joyous believer she had been. Her face was gloomy and downcast, and she was worried and anxious. She asked me if I would answer a question that was greatly troubling her: "Do you have the witness of the Spirit?"

I was surprised, but replied calmly, "I've had the witness for many years. Otherwise I wouldn't dare preach as I do."

She said sadly, "Recently I realized that I do not. I have lost all my joy and I'm afraid I'm not saved."

"This is remarkable," I said. "You said that you trusted Christ and rested on His Word, and I noticed how happy you were. How did you come to this conclusion?"

She then told me that a few weeks before, a peddler had come to her door selling some housewares. As he was leaving, he handed her a paper on the Pentecostal experience and asked, "Do you have the witness of the Spirit?"

Confused by the question she said, "I don't understand. I know I'm saved through the testimony of the Word of God. What do you mean by 'the witness'?"

"You say you are a Christian and do not understand about the witness? If you had the witness you would know it. And if

you don't have it, then you've never been converted."

He spoke so positively that she became troubled and asked, "What do you mean by the witness? How did you get it?"

He told her he had been a professing Christian and a church-member for many years, but with no assurance of salvation. Recently, he attended some meetings conducted by a woman who performed marvelous healings. He became convinced that he lacked the witness, so he went forward, and prayed earnestly for this missing thing. After several hours crying out to God for the witness, he declared, "I suddenly got it!"

"What did you get?" she inquired.

"The witness – it came right through the roof, hit me and burned like a ball of fire. It burned out all the doubt and all the sin from my heart, and I knew then it was the Spirit, witnessing that I was a child of God. I have had no desire for sin since, nor any sinful thought. Did anything like that ever happen to you?"

When she said it did not, he responded, "Then you should not think you are a Christian. What you need to do is seek the witness, and don't stop till you get it."

Filled with doubt and fear, she had been unhappy ever since. Though she prayed for the witness, she did not get it. Turning to me she asked, "Did you ever have anything like that happen when you received the witness?"

"No, thank God, I did not!"

"Thankful you did not! What did you get then?"

"I received something much better than that. If a ball of fire had hit me, I never could have been certain whether it came from God or Satan. But I have a witness that is unmistakable, and I'll gladly tell you about it. But which do you want first – the witness *to* you, the witness *in* you, or the witness *with* you?"

### **The Witness to Us**

*"The Holy Spirit also witnesses to us." Hebrews 10:15*

I turned to Hebrews 10:15, and showed her what I now want to bring to your attention: "The Holy Spirit also witnesses *to* us." The Epistle to the Hebrews first establishes Christ's superiority over angels, prophets and leaders of the old dispensation; then it shows the transcendent character of the new covenant of grace

and the one sacrifice on the cross as compared with the by-gone covenant and the many sacrifices of the old dispensation. It points out that those offerings could never perfect the conscience of the person who brought them because it is impossible for the blood of animals to cancel sin.

In those sacrifices offered year after year, there was but a remembrance, a calling to mind again and again, of sins from year to year. They could not purge the conscience, as David writes: "You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it ... Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Ps. 51:16,7).

All the legal sacrifices could do was bring the sin to mind. That is, when an Israelite brought his offering, he thereby confessed that he had sinned, and that his sin was an offense against the divine law, requiring propitiation. All these sacrifices pointed to Him who was to come – to Christ.

Suppose you are in debt. Your creditor rightfully demands payment, but you are unable to pay. The best you can do is give your promissory note for the amount. But does a note pay the debt? No, it just calls the debt to mind. If the note is renewed from year to year, the debt is still uncanceled. It is a reminder, an acknowledgement made every time you give a new note. So it was with the sacrifices of old. But the face of the note constantly increases owing to the unpaid interest, and the debt becomes larger and larger. Now, suppose a wealthy friend endorses the note for you, and pledges to pay if you cannot. That changes the whole thing! When the note comes due, your creditor collects from him, and you are free.

Jesus did that very thing. When He said, "Behold, I have come – in the volume of the Book it is written of Me – to do Your will, O God" (Heb. 10:7), He was saying, "I will be responsible. I will endorse all those notes. I will pay." And He did! On Calvary's cross He paid in full for every one who believes in Him. Old Testament believers looked forward to His coming. We look back to His cross. All alike are "justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24). He settled the sin question. He did the will of God, and we read, "By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:10). Thus, every charge is cleared



away, all iniquity is purged: "For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified" (Heb. 10:14). It is of this blessed fact that the Holy Spirit witnesses.

Of this offering of Christ to cancel our sin-debt we read that "the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us" (Heb. 10:15). And the writer of Hebrews quotes from the prophet Jeremiah this new covenant with its grand culmination: "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more" (Heb. 10:17). This is the Spirit's witness. It was He who caused Jeremiah to testify thus. The Scriptures are His testimony. In them He witnesses to us and gives us the assurance that our sins are gone; our conscience is purged, and our souls are free. Who would exchange God's sure witness for a vision, a dream, or an emotional experience?

You do not need to pray and plead with God to give you this blessed witness. It is there in His Word for you to believe. The wife whose story I told finally saw this truth and exclaimed, "I've had this witness for years! How foolish of me to doubt!"

I want to tell you of another case, sadder than hers. I was asked to call on a bewildered young mother who thought she had committed the "unpardonable sin." She was really a believer, but some cloud had come between her soul and God, and she had fallen into darkness. Unconfessed sin will often do this. I inquired to find out if this were the case. She said she had sinned, but had confessed all to God. However, she could not get her joy back. Though she had prayed for six weeks, the Lord did not answer, and she felt He had cast her off because she had no faith. She said she no longer believed in Him and He would not hear her cry.

I tried to help by reading her many Bible verses, but she could not fix her attention on any of them. I felt utterly cast down because I could not seem to do anything for her. Then I prayed, "Lord, what more can I say to this woman?" Quick as a flash, a new approach came to me and I asked, "Did you say you don't believe in Jesus, and so He won't hear your cry, though you have prayed for six weeks for help?"

She agreed and added, "I want to believe, but I can't. I don't know how to get faith. I am afraid I've committed the unpardonable sin."

I suggested, "If you are sure He has given you up, why don't you try praying to someone else?"

"Who else would I try?" she asked.

"Why not try the blessed Virgin Mary for a while? I have a Roman Catholic friend who says he never prays to Christ direct, but always to His blessed mother. He asks her to plead for him, because no one has as much influence with a son as his mother."

This young mother was shocked! I knew she thought my words sacrilegious, but I succeeded in startling her. "Why are you telling me to pray to the Virgin Mary?" she asked sternly. "She's only human, and a human being cannot save me."

"Then you feel the need of superhuman help. Why not try Michael the Archangel? He is the prince of angels, a very powerful being, and the one who is going to drive Satan out of the heavenly places. Pray to him for at least a week, and see if he will help you."

She sprang to her feet with indignation, exclaiming, "I don't understand you at all! Neither the Virgin Mary nor Michael the Archangel can save me. I would never pray to them."

"But you don't believe in Jesus either." Before I could finish, she cut me off with the realization, "Of course I believe in Him! What a fool I've been! There is no one else in all the universe I would think of praying to but to Him. I thought I had no faith, but now I know that I do have faith, because the only one I trust is Jesus."

We prayed together, and as the tears rolled down her cheeks she thanked Jesus for dying for her, and told Him she trusted Him alone. Then it was easy to consider some verses from the Word to clear up her remaining difficulties. She received them in all simplicity, as the Spirit's blessed witness.

### **The Witness in Us**

*"He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself."*

*1 John 5:10*

Now let's consider the witness *in* us. Scarcely had the first woman I told you about seen the truth of the witness to us, when she asked, "Isn't there a passage that says the Lord will put the witness *in* us?" We turned to 1 John 5. Again in this

wonderful portion the great theme is the work of Christ: "It is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth." And to what does He bear witness? To the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ: "This is He who came by water and blood – Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood" (1 Jn. 5:6).

John was standing by the cross when the soldier pierced the Savior's side. "He who has seen has testified," he wrote. Also, he recorded the striking fact that "blood and water came out" (Jn. 19:34-35). Years after that memorable day, the blood and the water remained associated in the apostle's mind – blood for judicial, and water for moral cleansing. Now as he writes his epistle of light and love, he proclaims the power of the blood to cleanse from all sin before God, and the application of the water of the Word to cleanse from all defilement day by day. And he tells us the Holy Spirit bears witness of this.

The words, "witness," "record" and "testimony," used in 1 John 5 are three renderings of the same Greek word. Read the entire passage using the word "witness" in each instance. How plain it becomes. God by the Spirit has borne witness to the atoning work of His Son. Then He tells us in verse 9 that if we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater. Now, we do receive the witness of men. We believe what men tell us concerning things we have no means of proving or researching for ourselves. How much more should we receive the witness of Him who cannot lie.

Some object saying that the Bible says "not all have faith" (2 Th. 3:2). But it is sin persisted in that makes it impossible for men to believe God. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17). That is why we are told that it is "by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). There must be divine testimony before there can be faith. If God has sent His Word to you, you are responsible to believe it. In fact, you insult God to His face if you do not believe. The witness of God is that which He has witnessed by His Spirit in the Word concerning His Son.

"He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of

His Son" (1 Jn. 5:10). Now weigh this well. You either have the witness in you that God has given concerning His Son, or you are making Him a liar. Fearful alternative, yet terribly true!

A Sunday school teacher once asked her class, "Is there anything God cannot do?" All but one said that "God can do everything." She agreed with them and continued with her lesson when one boy interrupted her: "Teacher, I know two things God cannot do."

"What do you think God cannot do?" she asked. Confidently came the answer, "God cannot lie, and He cannot see my sins since they are covered by the blood of Jesus."

Sometimes, after listening to a gospel message, people will say, "I will try to believe." Try to believe whom? Do you dare even talk of trying to believe God? What impudence! What impertinence! He who cannot lie gives you His witness concerning His Son, and you tell Him you will *try* to believe! You either believe Him or not! If you do not believe, you make Him a liar. You treat His testimony as though it were not worthy of belief. "This is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son" (1 Jn. 5:11). If you believe the message, you have eternal life and the witness within you, for God's testimony is written in your heart.

It is this engrafted word, received by faith, that produces the new birth. We have been "born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the Word of God which lives and abides forever ... Now this is the Word which by the gospel was preached to you" (1 Pet. 1:23-25). To believe the gospel is not simply to give mental assent to the facts recorded in the four Gospels, but it is to trust your soul to the Christ of whom they speak.

I cannot put my sin away, but the Spirit's witness tells me that "the Lord has laid on Him (Christ Jesus) the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6). I see myself included, and I rest upon that word. Thus I have the witness in myself. Who would exchange this unimpeachable witness for a vision of "a fiery ball" or even of angels descending from heaven to assure him of salvation. Could I trust the word of an angel more than the word of the living God? And how could I be sure that the angel was not

Satan, the one who “transforms himself into an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14) to deceive me? But the Word of God can never mislead. It is a witness that cannot fail. I believe it, and I have it in my heart.

### **The Witness with Us**

*“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit  
that we are children of God.” Romans 8:16*

Now let’s turn to Romans 8, that high plateau of truth where we learn that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, nor separation from the love of Christ. He met us in our need and will never surrender to destruction those who have fled to Him for refuge. In this chapter are three marvelous truths: the believer is in Christ; the Holy Spirit dwells with him; and God is for him.

The Holy Spirit – a divine Person, eternally one with the Father and the Son – comes to dwell within the believer. By Him I am sealed until the day of redemption. He claims me for Christ, and by Him I enter into communion with God. Apart from His indwelling I am not a member of Christ: “If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His” (Rom. 8:9). But, having received Him by faith, He now abides within me. He is the anointing, and by Him I am led into the knowledge of the Word of God. He opens up the treasures of divine truth. He takes up the things of Christ and shows them to me. “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom. 8:16). But how? By producing happy feelings, or ecstatic experiences? No!

Look at what follows: “And if children, then heirs – heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:17). How do I get this knowledge? By the Spirit’s witness. But exactly how, or where? Once more we return to the same truth we have seen before – by believing the Word of God. I might imagine that my happy feelings witnessed that I was a child of God; but happy feelings will never tell me I am an “heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ?”

Only the Word of God can make these blessed facts known to my spirit. The Holy Spirit who indwells the believer opens the

Word to my spirit, and makes me understand my present relationship to the Lord, and my high destiny. I learn that I, once an alien and an outcast, am now a child of God and joint-heir with Christ. God's Word says, "All things are yours ... And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. 3:21,23). What a blessed witness! It fills my soul with gladness, giving me songs in the night.

By the Spirit I cry, "Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15). The indwelling Spirit produces within me a sense of family responsibility and privilege. Once I was afraid of God; now I love Him and delight to be in His presence. I say with David, "It is good for me to draw near to God" (Ps. 73:28). I know what David could not know in a past dispensation – that God is my Father and I am His child.

The Spirit uses the Word to lead me into this blessedness. The better I understand the Word, the more I will enjoy communion with my Father in the Spirit's power. For by the Spirit I am able to look into God's face and cry, "Abba, Father," knowing I have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, and have been born of the Word and the Spirit.



## THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE BELIEVER

*“Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.” 2 Corinthians 1: 21-22*

In these two verses we have the various operations of the Holy Spirit briefly summarized in a striking way. There are four distinct phases of His work in and for the believer. First, we are established in Christ, which includes sanctification by the Spirit, new birth by the Spirit, and the baptism of the Spirit. Second, we are anointed by the same Spirit, with which all His gifts are linked. Third, we are sealed by the Spirit, insuring our full conformity to Christ in the day of the redemption of the body. Finally, we have the guarantee of the Spirit, which involves the thought of the firstfruits and the filling of the Spirit. Let's consider each of these in detail.

### **Established in Christ**

Being established in Christ is more than individual salvation, though it involves that. The expression, “He who establishes us with you in Christ” suggests the unity of the body, and links with 1 Cor. 12:12-13: “For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body ... and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.”

This is the great dispensational work of the Holy Spirit, His express purpose for coming. Before He could form the body, individuals must be separated from the world and must be born from above. It was the work of the Spirit to bring this about. He uses the Word of God to awaken the sinner; and when the Word is believed, He produces the new birth. Being “born of water and of the Spirit” really means born of the Word, which comes alive in the soul by the direct work of the Spirit. It is the

“washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (Ti. 3:5). Peter writes of our “having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the Word of God ... Now this is the Word which by the gospel was preached to you” (1 Pet. 1:23,25). James tells us, “Of His own will He brought us forth by the Word of Truth” (Jas. 1:18). And our Lord says, “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing” (Jn. 6:63).

The Holy Spirit sanctifies by exercising and brooding over the soul while it is still in darkness. Then the light shines in and the Word is believed. This was true in all dispensations. Men have always needed new birth to bring them into the family of God because “the flesh profits nothing.” It could never be made acceptable to God. A new nature was necessary, and this the Holy Spirit produced before He came at Pentecost to dwell in us, and to abide with us in our Lord’s absence.

At Pentecost He did a new work. He took up one hundred and twenty souls (all born of God), and baptized them into one body, thus forming the Church. By this act He established them in the Christ, making them one body with their glorified Head, and linking them one with another in a union as close as members in the human body. The baptism of the Spirit is therefore collective and dispensational. It is not something to be sought or prayed for or tarried for since the body has already been formed.

In the four Gospels and the first chapter of Acts, the baptism of the Spirit was future. In Acts 2 the promise is fulfilled. The only reference to the Spirit’s baptism after Acts 11 is 1 Corinthians 12:13, where it is a doctrinal statement to be believed, not an exhortation to seek after an experience.

Four times, as related in Acts, special supernatural manifestations accompanied the reception of the Spirit, as various peoples were incorporated into the Church. In Acts 2 all were Jews; in Acts 8 the same blessing falls upon regenerated Samaritans, adding them to the body of Christ. In Acts 10 the nucleus of Gentiles is baptized into the same body. And in Acts 19 a remnant of John’s disciples is brought in. In each instance there is a special miraculous endowment to confirm the souls of the saints, and to make known the truth that all distinctions are



done away in Christ, and there is but “one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling” (Eph. 4:4).

What grace on God’s part to give this four-fold testimony in the beginning! What folly it is for Christians to expect a duplication of these beginning manifestations. The body *is now* formed, and all believers *have* their part in it. As we are set apart and born of the Spirit, we receive Him as the indwelling Guest, and are thus brought into the good of the Spirit’s baptism.

If some Scriptures seem to suggest that the baptism of the Spirit is a blessing received after conversion, it is well to examine them carefully in context while determining whether they refer to a time *before* or *after* Pentecost – because the difference is immense. A new dispensation began when the Holy Spirit descended to dwell in the believer.

Let’s look at some of these passages to help place them. Jesus said, “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!” (Luke 11:13). Many take this as their authority for seeking the gift of the Spirit by prayer, but this was spoken by our Savior before the cross. The Father gave the Spirit at Pentecost; He does not now wait for us to ask Him to do so again. The wondrous gift once given abides in the Church and indwells every believer; all have been baptized into one body.

Consider the words, “He dwells with you and will be in you” (Jn. 14:17). Does it imply that some are only born of the Spirit while others are indwelt? Did Jesus say this before or after Pentecost? If you say “before,” you are correct! And He is contrasting two dispensations. The Spirit was *with* believers before the cross, but He is now *in* them. “If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ he is not His” (Rom. 8:9).

Did not our Lord command His disciples to tarry until they were endowed with power from on high? He did, and He particularly indicated where they were to wait – “in Jerusalem.” No other place would do, for that’s where the Spirit would come, even as the Son came to Bethlehem.

A man said to me recently, “I have just come from a great tarrying meeting. Hundreds tarried for many days at San Jose,

California, waiting for the Holy Spirit." I asked, "What authority did they have for that?" He told me Jesus said, "Tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high" (Lk. 24:49).

I asked, "Aren't you confusing locations and time? You are over ten thousand miles too far away, and over eighteen hundred years too late." If some of the disciples had "tarried" at Nazareth, some at Bethlehem, and others at Bethany, would the Holy Spirit have fallen on them on that Pentecost morning? Surely not! The command was, "Tarry in the city of Jerusalem." And as they waited there, the Holy Spirit came like a mighty wind sent from the Father and the Son to form the body of Christ, and to provide the waiting disciples with power to witness of the risen Christ. Thus He established them into the Christ – making them members of His body.

Don't misunderstand me. I am not suggesting that it is a vain thing for any believer or company of believers to wait on God for power to overcome the enemy and sound out the Good News. It is always good to do this: "Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength" (Isa. 40:31). This is true in all dispensations. But in this Church age, we do not wait for Him to send the Spirit. The Spirit is already here, and by His baptism we have all been joined to the body. However, we need to wait on God to show us any hindrance in our lives that may be keeping Him from working in us. As we judge ourselves, and learn from past failures to distrust self, we make room for the Holy Spirit to fill us with power, and use us to glorify God and bless a needy world.

But to tarry for the baptism of the Spirit is evidence of not understanding God's dispensational ways. The only verse in all the New Testament epistles where the baptism of the Holy Spirit is mentioned is 1 Corinthians 12:13; and there it is spoken of as a past event into which all Christians have been brought.

### **Anointed by the Spirit**

Now let's consider the second phase of the Spirit's work – the anointing. It may help to ask who were anointed in Old Testament times? Those familiar with the Bible know that

prophets, priests, and kings were anointed with oil to induct them into their offices. Some also will remember that the cleansed leper was anointed first by blood and then with oil, just as the priests were (Lev. 14:14-18). The leper is a type of ourselves – unclean by sin, cleansed by blood, and anointed with the Spirit of God. We are anointed as “kings and priests to ... God” (Rev. 1: 6).

Our Lord was anointed without blood because He was the sinless One who needed no sacrifice for Himself. We read, “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him” (Acts 10:38). This anointing took place immediately after His baptism in the Jordan, when He presented Himself without spot to be our Savior.

On the cross He offered Himself up. This is to be distinguished from His offering or pledging Himself to fulfill all righteousness on our behalf. As He came up out of the water, the Holy Spirit descended like a dove upon Him, and the Father declared, “You are my beloved Son; in You I am well pleased” (Lk. 3:22). Thus He was anointed – pointed out as the predicted Prophet, Priest, and King. He was the Prophet on earth, sealing His testimony with His blood. He is the Priest in heaven, ever living to make intercession for us. He is coming again to reign as the universal King.

Now in a very special way we share this threefold ministry. Anointed by the Spirit at our conversion and cleansed by the blood of Christ, we are empowered to speak for God on earth as His prophet-messengers. We are made priests, holy and royal, to enter into the holiest as purged worshipers, to show forth His praises in the world. And we will reign with Him as kings in the day of His power (1 Pet. 2:5,9).

Is this true of all believers or just a favored few? Careful study of 1 John 2:12-29 makes plain that it is true of all. Verse 12 refers to all believers as “children” whose “sins are forgiven.” Verse 13 divides these children into three classes in the family of God – fathers, young men, and little children or babes. To these three classes he then addresses himself, giving a separate message to

each. To the babes he says, in verse 20, "You have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things." In verse 27, while still addressing the youngest of saints he writes, "The anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you, but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him."

Since the anointing is the portion of the youngest Christian, how much more so of the young men and fathers. All Christians are anointed. In fact, this is seen in the very name divinely given them, as Christ means the "anointed." Christians are "anointed ones," linked by the Spirit to their glorified Head.

The anointing opens our understanding of the Scriptures and keeps us from Satanic perversions of the truth. To the unregenerate in Laodicea the Lord says, "Anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see" (Rev. 3:18). This was their need, as natural men unable to comprehend spiritual things.

What believers need is to learn to depend on the Holy Spirit, and thus profit by the anointing which already abides in them. The Holy Spirit delights to glorify Christ, and if there is a willing heart and mind, He will preserve the simplest from error and lead them into all truth.

In Los Angeles some years ago, I was listening to a well-known preacher dishonor God in a most dogmatic manner. Standing near me in the crowd was a plainly dressed, simple man, who seemed to me to be listening with great interest. Fearing he would be deceived by this false teacher, I decided to talk to him after the address was finished. But I found I was not needed, as he had better help than I could ever give.

As the speaker ended his attack on Christianity, a man walked over to this simple man, put his hand on his shoulder and said, "What do you think of that, George? He sure knocked the bottom out of all your old Baptist teaching. He showed that the churches are all wrong that believe in the Trinity, the deity of Christ, and all that stuff. I guess you're going to join his group now?"

"He sure did attack all I've been believing for years. But no, I ain't going to join with him. I couldn't debate him, but a voice in

my soul kept saying, 'lies, lies, lies' the whole time he was talking. I ain't going to believe a word he said – not a word." I was delighted to see how the anointing had enabled this man to withstand the assault of the devil. The Spirit dwells within us for that very purpose.

All the spiritual gifts are linked with the anointing. In 1 Corinthians 12:4 we read that "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit." He imparts some gift to each and every member of the body to be used in subjection to the risen Lord. All do not have the same gift; and while we are told to "earnestly desire the best gifts" (1 Cor 12:31), we are not promised any particular gift that we might admire and desire. "The Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills" (1 Cor. 12:11), that each may profit thereby, and for the edification of the whole body.

Nor are the spectacular gifts – such as healing, tongues, miracles – the most important. The greatest of all is prophecy – the ability to present the truth of God so that the hearer will be stirred up, blessed, and comforted. No other gift compares with this in value. But all gifts must be exercised in love: "Though I have the gift of prophecy ... but have not love, I am nothing" (1 Cor. 13:2).

### **Sealed by the Spirit**

The third aspect to consider is the sealing of the Spirit. This is another term used in connection with our Lord. In John 6:27 He says, "Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him." This is the chapter in which the Lord speaks of Himself as the "bread of God," "the bread of life," and "the true bread from heaven."

This life-giving bread was presented to men that they might eat and live forever, sealed by the Father. Here we see how the anointing and sealing take place at the same time. The anointing really was the sealing. It was the Father owning Him as His well-beloved One, declaring His delight in Him.

It is very common today to find bread for sale with the maker's name on it. The bread is sealed with the name of the

baker who says, in effect, "This bread is so good I put my name on it and stand behind it in every way." Similarly, God the Father sealed the Bread from heaven. He acknowledged and approved His blessed Son in everything, for in the fullest sense Jesus could say, "I and My Father are one" (Jn. 10:30).

Think of it! If He were less than divine what boldness that would have been! Every saved one would reverse the order and say, "My Father and I," but He is the Eternal Son become flesh, and one with the Father.

Now let's consider the sealing of the believer, for the same Spirit who sealed the Savior seals all who are saved by Him. The first passage that demands our attention is Ephesians 1:13: "In Him you also trusted after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise."

How soul-assuring! Sealing is not a question of experience. It is a precious fact to be accepted on the authority of the Word of God. When we believed the gospel, we were sealed by the Spirit. God the Father put His stamp upon us, so to speak. He did this by giving us the Spirit to dwell in us. He who dwells in us is the seal.

Ephesians 4:30 says, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." You cannot grieve an influence; you grieve a person. And you have been sealed by a divine person.

Does it say you are sealed only as long as you are faithful? No! Because if it did, who could be sure of it from one day to another? Does it say you can grieve Him away? No! Because He has come to abide with and in us. "By whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" is the day of Christ's return, when the redemption of our body will take place. Till that blessed day He never leaves the believer, neither in life nor in death.

I love to think of Him keeping guard over those who sleep in Jesus. The holy dead are not alone: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (Ps. 116:15). He never loses sight of one of them, and when He returns He will quicken them to resurrection-life, and escort them to the meeting place in the air.

We must not overlook the admonition, "Do not grieve the

Holy Spirit.” How do we grieve Him? By disobeying the Word, and by indulging in anything forbidden in the immediate context of Ephesians 4:25-32. Lying, dishonest practices, corrupt speech, bitterness, anger, clamor, evil speaking and malice – all these and more grieve Him and hinder His ministry of grace.

To walk in the Spirit is to walk before God in lowliness, meekness, purity and self-judgment, obeying the written Word, and thus doing His will from the heart. He who walks this way does not grieve this heavenly Guest who has sealed us until the day of our triumph over death, when our descending Lord shall change our bodies of humiliation, making them like the body of His glory.

### **The Guarantee of the Spirit**

Now let’s consider what is involved in the guarantee of the Spirit. Ephesians 1:13 speaks of our sealing; and the next verse speaks of the Holy Spirit as “the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of his glory.”

Until this redemption of the body takes place, the indwelling Spirit enables us to enjoy a little of what will be our portion forever. He ministers Christ to our souls. He opens the Word to us. We worship by the Spirit. We pray in the Spirit. We enjoy the fellowship of the Spirit, and “the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (Rom. 5:5). So even now, as we tread the sands of this wilderness, we have “the firstfruits of the Spirit” (Rom. 8:23). Here we taste the precious fruit of the land – the Christian’s cluster of Eschol’s grapes (Num. 13:23) – which shall be our portion forever.

How important then is the exhortation in Ephesians 5:18: “Do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation (excess); but be filled with the Spirit.” God wants us to enter into His fullness, He wants us entirely under His control – filled with the Spirit day by day.

We are never encouraged to seek the baptism of the Spirit. We are never told to be anointed with the Spirit. Neither are we commanded to be sealed with the Spirit. These are blessed facts, true of every believer. But Ephesians 5:18 tells us to be “filled

with the Spirit.” It is a command that we are not free to ignore. How shall we obey it? Can we be filled at will? Do we obtain it by prayer? Is it a blessing that comes once for all? Or do we need to seek it again and again?

We cannot be filled by claiming it by faith. Neither are we filled by praying for it. Once filled, there is no guarantee that we will stay filled. We are only filled with the Spirit as we yield to God in obedience to His Word. By comparing Colossians 3:16 with Ephesians 5:18, we see that if the Word of Christ dwells in us richly, we are filled with the Spirit. A Word-filled Christian is a Spirit-filled Christian. I am not talking about one who has merely a mental knowledge of the Word – he is not necessarily Spirit-filled. But when the Word is hidden in one’s heart and is controlling his ways, the Spirit of God fills and energizes. The Spirit cannot fill us if we ignore the written Word.

People pray to be filled with the Spirit, as though the Spirit were a liquid. He is a Person who wants to get more of you. When you let Him take charge of you, you will be filled with the Spirit. He will fill every room in your being to which you give Him the key. If He does not fill you, it is because you are keeping back some part for yourself. Do not simply give Him the best room. He would have all for the glory of the Lord, whom He delights to exalt. If you can say, “None for me, all for Thee,” then you will be filled indeed.





## THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

In 1 Corinthians 12, one of the two great gift chapters of the Bible, there are two verses which I would like to bring to your attention: "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all ... But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills" (vv. 7,11). From these verses we learn three principles in connection with the use of spiritual gifts.

First, gifts are not given for an individual's happiness, but for the edification of others. Second, the gifts are only of value as used in the energy of the Spirit who gave them. Third, the Spirit is absolutely sovereign in giving gifts. He distributes "as He wills," not according to our desires, however fervent they are.

These three principles, if rightly understood, would deliver many Christians from much of the misunderstanding as to the nature of spiritual gifts that exists today, and would also save many from the attempt to use the gifts in the energy of the flesh.

### **The Building Up of the Body**

First Corinthians 12 begins with a list of the gifts. There is no promise that all those mentioned in this list will remain in the Church to the end, but there is a definite promise that those mentioned in Ephesians 4:11-16 will do so. While there is no definite statement that some of the early gifts will be withdrawn, Scripture itself is witness that many of them began to disappear even in apostolic days, and history proves they have seldom, if ever, been manifested since.

For example, the gift of healing was frequently evident at the beginning of the dispensation. It seems that Paul himself seldom exercised this gift in his later years. Witness the fact that three of his friends were sick, and he performed no miracles to relieve them. Trophimus was left sick at Miletus (2 Tim. 4:20); Timothy was exhorted to use a well-known remedy for his stomach trouble (1 Tim. 5:23); Epaphroditus was sick unto death for a

long period, and Paul was greatly concerned about him. But God had mercy on him, raising him up at last, not miraculously, but after the disease had run its course (Phil. 2:25-27). Paul could not remove his own "thorn in the flesh," but was given grace to endure it (2 Cor. 12:7).

The gift of tongues was given to many when the gospel was first sent to all nations. Babel's confusion was overcome when the twelve apostles, empowered by the Spirit, preached in languages they had never learned (Acts 2:1-13). However, in all the centuries since, Christian missionaries have had to learn by diligent study, the foreign languages of the peoples to whom they would give the gospel. As long as it was profitable to give such sign gifts (signs not to believers, but to unbelievers), the Spirit gave them generously. But then they were gradually withdrawn as the need for them passed away.

The gifts are never cited as the proofs of the baptism of the Spirit – though the gift of tongues accompanied it on two occasions, at Pentecost and in Cornelius' house. It was natural as the dispensation was being ushered in to have some strong evidence of the reception of the Spirit. To ask for or expect that same evidence today, however, would only show that the asker does not apprehend the spiritual character of the Church in this present age.

Even in the wonderful days immediately following Pentecost, all did not possess the same gifts: "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all." Each received the gift he could best use for his special work and for the good of all – the preaching of the gospel to the lost and the building up of the body, the Church.

So it is today. The gifts in the Church today are not as many as at the beginning, but they are all given for its benefit and upbuilding. The gifts are not given for show, nor to prove the Spirit's indwelling, nor for the happiness of the recipient. All are not evangelists; all cannot preach. All do not possess the ability to shepherd the flock of God; but all have some measure of gift to be used for the blessing of the rest.

Romans 12:3-8 is intimately linked with Ephesians 4:11-16. No miracle working is mentioned there, because the whole Church

is in view at all times; but each believer is seen to have some gift, differing according to the grace given him. And all the gifts, even that of wealth, are to be used in subjection to the risen Lord, and to build up.

### **The Energy of the Spirit**

And this is what 1 Corinthians 12:11 implies. The gifts are only of value as used in the energy of the Spirit. Men may have gifts of exhortation, prophecy and teaching, and may use them largely to attract attention to themselves and make a name for themselves. This misuses the gift for a purpose for which it was never intended. This is a very real danger, to which every gifted person is exposed.

Naturally we all love admiration, and are inclined to seek it from those around us. Like Ishmael, we are easily lured into living "in the presence of all our brethren" (Gen. 16:12) instead of in the presence of God. Therefore we need to remind ourselves that everything we have received comes from God. And since this is so, why glory as if it were something of our own?

The God-gifted preacher will desire only to preach in the energy of the Spirit. The devoted teacher will yearn to speak only as he is directed by the Spirit, who gave the gift and alone is competent to cause it be used aright. And it is so with all other gifts. None are given for self-importance, or to increase the happiness of the recipient. All are to be used as the Spirit directs.

### **The Sovereignty of the Spirit**

The Spirit is sovereign in His gift giving. He distributes "to each one individually as He wills." It is true that we are told to "earnestly desire the best gifts" (1 Cor. 12:31), but there is no promise that any gift can be received just because we desire it. It is "as He wills." Still, as the Corinthians were exhorted to "earnestly desire the best gifts," we may rightly pray for gifts, but we cannot demand them. There are gifts that some will never have. There are gifts some are not fit to have. The Spirit gives as He deems best.

This ought to show how unscriptural it is to claim certain miraculous gifts – such as tongues, interpretations and healings – as though they were special marks of divine favor. Paul scorned such foolishness when he said, “I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in an *unknown* tongue” (1 Cor. 14:19).

There are many deceived people, connected with certain emotional sects in Christendom, who would rather be thrilled by the novelty of speaking five words in some strange tongue, than speak ten thousand words in their own language for the benefit of others.

Though I have used the expression, “unknown tongue,” in quoting the apostle’s words, there are no unknown tongues in the scriptural account of the gift of tongues. The word “unknown” is either italicized or absent in our English Bibles. They were actual tongues known to the people to whom the Spirit enabled them to speak (Acts 2:6). If any are able to preach the gospel in languages they have never learned, to people who speak that language, by all means let them use their gift in subjection to the glorified Head of the Church.

Who would forbid such speaking in tongues? Dying millions are waiting while missionaries study strange dialects and difficult languages before they can preach the Good News and be understood. But who goes to these people today with the gift of tongues, making known the riches of God’s grace in a language never learned in schools or through personal contact with those who speak it?

The gifts are all viewed in Ephesians as having been given by the risen and ascended Christ: “When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men” (Eph. 4:8). Even the gifts of apostle and prophet are viewed in the same light. Though Christ chose the twelve during His earthly ministry, it was only after they were in the Spirit that they took their official place and began using their gifts. He alone calls and qualifies evangelists, pastors and teachers to carry on the work which the apostles and prophets of this present dispensation began. We have their ministry in their gospels and epistles.

It is the business of the evangelist to preach the gospel they

preserved for us. It is the work of the pastor and the teacher to apply and explain the instruction they left on record for our learning. And to do this right, earnest application is required: "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). And this can only happen when the servant's will is yielded to God's will, and he learns to do and teach as guided by the Spirit.

To be really edifying, all ministry must be in the power of the Holy Spirit. Gift, of itself, does not necessarily prove spirituality. The Corinthians were using the gifts for self-gratification rather than to honor the Lord who gave them. It is only as one realizes his responsibility to minister to the Lord, with the ability that God gives, that he is on the safe path. Any gift perverted to exalt self will result in damage.

We have examples of this in those men Paul wrote about who preached Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to the bonds he was already enduring for the truth. While he rejoiced that Christ was preached regardless of the motives or spiritual condition of the preachers, it was still a serious thing for them to misuse their gifts (Phil. 1:15-18).

Mere natural ability is not to be confused with a divinely given gift. For instance, speaking ability alone does not make a man a preacher. The ability to teach should not be confused with the gift of teaching. The gift of the evangelist makes the ready speaker a true gospel preacher. The tongues of fire, though now unseen, still rest upon the heads of God's anointed servants to the Church.

How important then that he who ministers God's Word be often alone with God to hear Him speaking from the mercy-seat, so that he can go forth to speak the truth as His oracle. The minister's message is not only to be in accord with the Holy Scriptures, but also with the mind of God for the moment. Of Haggai we read, "Then Haggai, the Lord's messenger, spoke the Lord's message to the people" (Hag. 1:13).

No matter how often a preacher may speak from some particular Bible portion, or a teacher instruct along one particular line of truth, it is necessary to do so only after he has

been with God. Only as the servant realizes his utter weakness and constant dependence upon God will he preach, teach or exhort in the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul said, "I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling" (1 Cor. 2:3), even though he was accustomed to setting forth divine mysteries. After having been with God, he could stand before men and say, "When I am weak, then am I strong" – the power of the Spirit enabling him for ministry.



## OUR RESPONSIBILITY

Before closing, a word to all Christians regarding their responsibility toward those recognized for their gifts to the whole Church. Be careful how you treat them, remembering that they are the risen Christ's love-gifts to His people. Whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, all are yours, and to be cherished as such. Do not spoil them by flattery. Do not put the gift in place of the Giver. Do not be occupied with their eloquence or natural ability. This is to magnify the servant instead of the message.

We should recognize the One of whom the voice speaks, and not become occupied with the voice itself. "Speak not of Carey, said William Carey, missionary to India, "but of Carey's Savior!" And every true-hearted servant of God desires the same from those who hear him. "He must increase, but I must decrease" (Jn. 3:30), cried John the Baptist, the Lord's divinely appointed forerunner.

On the other hand, remember that to belittle the messenger and to criticize the servant is to indirectly insult the Master who sent him. He has said, "He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me" (Lk. 10:16). If this is kept in mind it would put a clamp on unkind fault-finding. All the work God has committed to men has been accomplished through imperfect instruments.

He has had only one perfect Servant in this scene, and He was scorned, derided, and crucified. All other servants fall short in something, and most in many things. Nevertheless, God graciously uses them. He is very jealous of them and notes every word spoken against them, while He rewards all who receive them for His name's sake: "Because they went forth for His name's sake ... We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth" (3 Jn. 7-8).



## **The Holy Spirit At Work**

In his typically engaging style, *H. A. Ironside* clearly presents the mission, witness and gifts of the Holy Spirit. He also explains how the Christian is anointed and sealed by the Spirit. If these aspects of the Spirit's work are unfamiliar to you, or if they have been confusing to you, then you will want to read this booklet.

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