

Preface

There is a great deal of emphasis on the Holy Spirit in Christianity today. Unfortunately in that emphasis there is a lot of error being disseminated. This is because much of what is being said about the Spirit of God is rooted in an experientialism that has displaced true biblical spirituality.

When we let the Bible say what it says instead of imposing upon it what we want it to say, the truth becomes abundantly clear. This booklet is an attempt to present what the Bible says about the Holy Spirit. If we are to be effect as believers in Jesus Christ, it is imperative that we understand how the Holy Spirit desires to work in and through us so that we may properly submit to Him. It is my hope that the words on these pages will assist the reader to this end.

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The Comforter

We can only dream about what it was like to be one of the disciples and to walk with the Lord Jesus Christ here on the earth. It must have been a marvelous experience to have the Divine presence so close.

At first, the disciples did not realize that Christ's presence was temporary. Once they realized who Jesus was, they were convinced He would always be with them. He was the fulfillment of prophecy, the climax to everything they had anticipated for Israel, the crescendo to the final deliverance of the Nation. But about six months before the crucifixion, Jesus began making statements about leaving, saying things like, "*Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me*" (John 7:33). Suddenly, the marvel of the disciples' experience turned into confusion as they tried to understand why Jesus was talking about going away.

He reassured them that when he departed, Another one would come to take His place. "*I will not leave you comfortless,*" He said (John 14:18), promising that when He went away He would not leave them alone as orphaned children in a foreign land. "*I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter,*" He said, "*The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name*" (John 14:26).

While we did not have the privilege of knowing the physical presence of the Lord Jesus Christ as the disciples did, we do have the opportunity to share with them in the promise of the Comforter's presence. And, that is just as marvelous as the physical presence of Christ.

I. ANOTHER COMFORTER

Another

The word "another" can be used in two different ways in our language. It can be used to indicate that we have another one exactly like the one we already have or that we have another one very different from the one we already have.

Picture a child with something in both hands. You say to that child, "What do you have in this hand?" And he says, "I have a crayon." Then you say to the child, "What do you have in your other hand?" And the child responds, "I have another one." The obvious meaning is that he has another crayon. Both items are the same thing. They are both crayons.

Then the child begins to use his crayons to color a picture and you say to the child, "What color is the grass?" And the child says, "The grass is green." Then you ask the child, "Is the sky the same color as the grass?" And the child responds, "No, it's not the same color, it's another color, it's blue." The sky and the grass are different colors.

When Jesus said to the disciples that he would send another Comforter, he meant he would send another of the same kind. Referring to the Holy Spirit, He was saying that the Holy Spirit is just like Himself. When the Holy Spirit is present in a believer today, it is exactly the same kind of presence the disciples experienced when Jesus walked with them here on earth.

Comforter

The English word "comforter" comes from the Greek noun "Paraclete," which is used five times in Scripture. Four times it is translated "Comforter" in reference to the Holy Spirit (John 14:16,26, 15:26, and 16:7), and one time it is translated "Advocate" in reference to Jesus Christ (I John 2:1). The reason the translators applied different English words to the different persons of the Trinity is because God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, same in kind, are different in the works they do. The word "Advocate" refers to one who makes a plea on behalf of another person accused of doing wrong; and the word "Comforter" refers to one who strengthens a person who is experiencing trouble. The distinction is that the Advocate focuses on the problem while the Comforter focuses on the person.

Now think of this in terms of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. While Jesus was on earth, He focused His attention on man's problem of sin. He came to seek and to save that which was lost, to bear the sins of the many, and to bear the iniquity of the world upon Himself on the cross. When He told His disciples He would leave them, it was because He knew He would successfully deal with man's problem and complete His earthly task. He could then return to Heaven and the Holy Spirit would come to do His part, focusing on the people Christ had redeemed from sin. He would indwell the believers, strengthen and encourage them in their faith, and help them walk in newness of life.

II. HIS ABIDING PRESENCE

Colossians 2:9 says that all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Jesus Christ bodily. That means you cannot separate the members of the Trinity one from another. We may not understand how that works, but it is a fact. In Jesus Christ dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. As Jesus Himself testified, "*He that hath seen me hath seen the Father*" (John 14:9); and "*I and my Father are one*" (John 10:30).

Similarly, all the fulness of the Godhead also dwells in the Holy Spirit -- spiritually. This is why Jesus said, "**We** will make our abode with him," when he told the disciples another Comforter would take His place. **WE!** In John 14:16, Jesus said, "**He** (the Holy Spirit) *may abide with you for ever.*" In John 14:18 He said, "**I** will not leave you comfortless: *I will come to you.*" Then in John 14:23 He said, "**We** will come unto him and make our abode with him." From these three statements it is appropriate to say that dwelling within a believer is the entire Godhead as it is represented by the Holy Spirit. Thus, the Word of God uses the terms Spirit of God and Spirit of Christ interchangeably (Romans 8:9).

So here we have this marvelous person, the Holy Spirit, who is exactly the same kind of person that Jesus Christ is and He dwells in us and abides with us. Through His presence in our lives, we may have the same kind of experience the disciples had when Jesus was walking on the earth. It is a Spiritual presence rather than physical, but it is Divine and consists of all that God is.

III. HIS PERSONABLENESS

The presence of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life is not to be a mystery, but a conscious joy all the time. John 14:17 says, "*Even the Spirit of Truth whom the world cannot receive because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him - **BUT YOU KNOW HIM***" -

for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

When is the last time you awoke in the morning, looked at yourself in the mirror and consciously thought about the Holy Spirit dwelling in you? Most of us go through an entire day, an entire week, an entire month, and maybe even most of our lives without giving any thought to the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives. Yet the Spirit of God embodying the fulness of the Godhead spiritually dwells within us and abides with us all the time.

Jesus said, "I will not make you an orphan. I will not leave you comfortless. I will not let you alone in a strange land. You will have the comforting, sustaining, personal ministry of the Holy Spirit with you always."

IV. HIS SELFLESSNESS

Some believe God to be an obstinate ogre, who demands in an unholy manner that everyone worship Him, and who unjustly expects everyone to obey His rules or else go to Hell. Deity does impose some demands upon its subject, but the justice of God does not prevent Him from being humble.

Psalm 113 describes God as one who humbles Himself. It begins, "*Praise ye the Lord. Praise, O ye servants of the Lord, praise the name of the Lord. Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth and for evermore. From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the Lord's name is to be praised.*" It then refers to God's loftiness. "*The Lord is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens. Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high.*" But then it describes God's humility. "*Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth!*" What is the result of the humility of this lofty God who is above everything? What happens when he humbles Himself? "*He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill.*" Here is a wonderful truth about the lofty God we believe in. He is not so high that He does not have a heart for the little people he created.

The humility of God is expressed particularly by the person of the Holy Spirit. John 14:26 says the Father will send the Holy Spirit and John 15:26 says that the Son will send the Holy Spirit. So the Holy Spirit is sent by the Father and by the Son. Whom does the Holy Spirit get to send? No one. Does it bother Him that He is sent but never gets to send? One remarkable observation we may make in Scripture is that there is no record of complaint from any of the members of the Trinity directed towards any other members in the Trinity. There is complete harmony, humility, and selflessness within the Godhead.

Even after the Holy Spirit indwells the believers, He has nothing to say from Himself. "*Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come...; he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak....*" The Holy Spirit is not going to make things up on His own apart from the rest of the Godhead. Only that which He hears from the Father is what He will pass on to believers. He selflessly communicates that which is given to Him by the Father, exactly as Jesus Christ did.

In addition, after the Holy Spirit indwells the believers, He has nothing to say about Himself. He testifies of Jesus and not of Himself (John 15:26). He glorifies Jesus and not Himself (John 16:14). He selflessly works to minister to us without bringing attention to Himself above God the Father or God the Son.

Conclusion

We are not orphans. When Jesus left the earth, He sent someone just like Himself to abide with us and comfort us. As those who have received Jesus Christ as Savior, we have the wonderful privilege of having the Spirit of Christ with us all the time.

And, if the character of the Holy Spirit portrays the selflessness and humility of God, a person who walks in the Spirit will do the same. In fact, it is contradictory to claim to walk in the Spirit and at the same time to live with pride in one's heart. The result of walking in the Spirit, and allowing Him to use your members as His instruments, is to find yourself constantly becoming more humble, more selfless, more available to minister to the needs of others.

As a Christian, you can determine how well you are walking in the Spirit by the countenance of your heart. If you spend a lot of energy thinking about yourself, your own comfort, your own importance, and your own success, you are not walking in the Spirit. But if you spend a lot of energy thinking about others, their comfort, their value, and their welfare, that is a good indication you are following the Holy Spirit's lead. The Holy Spirit is not going to lead you to a life of boastfulness and pride. He will lead you to be one of those little people to whom it does not matter that they are thanked for their efforts because they know in the eyes of God they have done what He has called them to do.



The Indwelling, Baptizing, and Filling Works of the Holy Spirit

The terms indwelling, baptizing, and filling are often used interchangeably to refer to a single work of the Holy Spirit. This is unfortunate. By lumping these three things together, some misunderstand part of the dynamics of a believer's relationship with God. The Holy Spirit does many things in a believer's life, including the distinct works of indwelling us, baptizing us, and filling us. In the following paragraphs, each of these terms will be defined and their distinctions made plain.

I. THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

When people use these three terms interchangeably, they generally associate all of them with the concept of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit refers to the time when the Spirit of God enters into a person who believes in Jesus. Neither baptism nor filling refer to this event.

The Temple was the place in the Old Testament where God dwelt among men. The glory of God resided in a small room in the Temple called the Holy of Holies. In the Church Age, God dwells among men by residing in all the bodies of those who receive His Son as their Savior. Believers' bodies, having been bought with a price, become the property of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19-20). It is then the reasonable service of each believer to present his body as a living sacrifice unto God (Romans 12:1) and to possess his body in sanctification and honor (I Thessalonians 4:4) so as to maintain a clean environment worthy of that Holy resident. It is a wonderful and marvelous and awesome thing to realize that the Spirit of the very God who sits upon the throne in Heaven actually resides in your body. It is also not a thing to be taken lightly.

When speaking about the indwelling it is insufficient to say that the Holy Spirit comes into a person's life. Such terminology implies that He merely comes into the perimeter of a person's experience, coming close to him and perhaps walking side by side with him. The Scriptures say very precisely that the Holy Spirit enters into the physical body of a person who believes in Christ. I Corinthians 6:19 specifies this as the location of the Spirit's dwelling place when it says, "*What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you.*" The Holy Spirit does not just come close to a person, He literally takes up residence in the physical body of a person.

This indwelling is also a permanent condition that lasts from the moment of salvation until the time the believer leaves the earth. Ephesians 1:13-14 explains that upon believing in Jesus for salvation, a person is sealed with the Holy Spirit which serves as the down payment of all that is promised and that He is so sealed until all the promises are realized in glory.

II. THE BAPTISM BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

Baptism by the Holy Spirit refers to something entirely different from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, even though they both take place at the same time. Baptism by the Holy Spirit is the event in which the Holy Spirit places a believer into the Body of Christ.

I Corinthians 12:13 provides the defining statement about baptism by the Holy Spirit: "*For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.*" Baptism by the Spirit is not referring to the time when the Spirit of God enters the body of a believer but when the believer enters the Body of Christ. It is called baptism by the Spirit because the Holy Spirit is the one that places the believer into that spiritual Body.

For those who believe that baptism is the same as indwelling, consider this analogy that Christ Himself draws between being baptized with water and being baptized with the Holy Spirit. In Acts 1:5, Jesus was talking to the disciples just before He ascended into Heaven. He said, "*For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.*" When John baptized the people with water, what did he do? Did he put the water into the people? Or did he put the people into the water? Think about which way it went. When he baptized with water, did he say, "Put your head back and open your mouth because I am going to pour water into you?" No, the baptism of John did not involve pouring water into the people. He immersed the people into water.

In the same way, baptism by the Spirit does not involve pouring or placing the Holy Spirit into a believer. Rather, it is the placing of the believer into the Spiritual Body of Jesus Christ. When a believer is indwelt, the Spirit comes into him. When he is baptized, the believer is placed into Christ.

Jesus referred to this interesting reciprocal relationship that the Church would share with Him. In John 15:4-5 He said, "*Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.*" This is wonderfully fulfilled by the indwelling and baptizing ministries of the Holy Spirit. Christ now abides in us by the indwelling of His Spirit. We abide in Christ after we are baptized into the Body of Christ by His Spirit.

Both of these things, indwelling and baptizing, take place at the moment a person

is saved. Romans 8:9 makes it clear that unless a person is indwelt by the Spirit, he does not belong to Christ. Having the Spirit and belonging to Christ are two inseparable matters, even though they are distinct from each other in what they mean.

III. THE FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

To be filled with the Holy Spirit is something else all together. To be filled with the Spirit means to be under His control. Ephesians 5:18 explains, "*Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.*"

The normal usage of the word "fill" in modern English refers to placing something in a container such as filling a bottle with water or filling a can with paint. But the biblical concept of being filled with the Spirit suggests an entirely different idea.

Think about the illustration given in this statement by Scripture, "*and be not drunk with wine.*" This does not refer to placing alcoholic beverages into a person, but to the effect the alcohol has on a person after it is in his system. Just so, being filled with the Holy Spirit does not refer to His coming into a person, but to the effect He has on a person's life after he is present.

Think about some aspects of the control which alcohol exerts over a person. It dulls the judgment and decision making powers, slows reaction time, disorients coordination, blurs the vision, slurs the speech, effects the balance and equilibrium, causes swaying when a person walks and can even make a person unconscious. In other words, when alcohol takes control of a human body, it radically changes the way that person functions.

In contrast to the nasty effects of alcohol, but in exactly the same fashion of taking control, the Holy Spirit can radically change the behavior of a believer. After He indwells someone who has received Christ, the Spirit can alter a person's activities from being fleshly to being spiritual. The Bible speaks of many ways in which the Holy Spirit accomplishes this. For example, He quickens (Romans 8:11), enlightens (I Corinthians 12:3), convicts (John 16:8), comforts (John 15:26), teaches (John 16:13; I Corinthians 2), cleanses (I Corinthians 6:11), leads (Romans 8:14; Galatians 5:18), assures (Romans 8:16), seals (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30), assists (Romans 8:26), intercedes (Romans 8:26), transforms (II Corinthians 3:18), preserves (II Timothy 1:14; Jude 24), and makes fruitful (Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 5:9). One example of the way the Holy Spirit exercises control in a believer's life is the fruit of the Spirit. These are not simply things God expects the members of Christ to produce on their own. Instead, they are things He wants to produce by His Spirit through us. It becomes possible for us to love and have joy, and experience peace, and be longsuffering, and be gentle, and be good, and exercise faith, and be meek, and be temperate because the Holy Spirit is working within us and through us and because these things are the fruit of His control over our lives.

Another example can be seen in the events of the book of Acts. When Acts 2:4 says that "*they were all filled with the Holy Ghost,*" it is referring to the control the Spirit exercised in their lives and not His indwelling or baptizing ministries. People did or said things not because of the event of their salvation, nor because they were merely indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but because the Spirit took control of their lives after He indwelt them and after He had placed them into the Body of Christ. Acts 4:8 says, "*Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them.*" And Acts 4:31 says, "*and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.*" See the pattern? Peter had received the permanent indwelling of the Spirit of God in Acts chapter two. So, the

events in Acts chapter four were not referring to Peter's receiving the Holy Spirit, but to the Holy Spirit taking control of his life for that particular speech. It was a moment in which Peter had submitted to the control of the Holy Spirit so that the Spirit would be able to use Peter to say the things that needed to be said. And, this is exactly the way He wants to control all of the members of the Body of Christ.

The filling of the Holy Spirit has a direct effect upon our service for the Lord. Without being filled, we will be ineffective, no matter how hard we try to do our best for God. There is nothing within ourselves or our flesh that is capable of truly honoring God (Romans 7:18). Even good things like teaching a Sunday School class, singing in the choir, leading in worship, preaching, providing special music or being an usher and welcoming people into the Church building can be a flop when done in the flesh instead of in the Spirit. It is not enough to say, "God, I want to do a good job for You." We must say instead, "God, I make myself available to You; so your Spirit may do through me what needs to be done." The Bible says in I Corinthians 12:7 that "*The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man.*" As He dwells in our bodies, He desires to manifest Himself through the use of our bodies to do the works of righteousness .

How does one get filled with the Holy Spirit? Romans 6:11-13 explains, "*Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.*" First of all, recognize that you are dead to sin and alive to God. This means, make sure you are saved because unsaved people are not filled with the Holy Spirit. He only takes control of those in whom He dwells. Secondly, yield, or turn over the use of, the members of your physical body to the Holy Spirit. Consciously acknowledge His presence and submit the various parts of your body to Him. They then become instruments He can use to accomplish the works of righteousness.

Conclusion

Understanding these three distinct ministries of the Holy Spirit gives us some insight into why so many churches are in turmoil today. By interpreting all three as the same thing, many fail to realize the need to submit repeatedly to the control of the Holy Spirit. A person is indwelt and baptized only once at the moment of his salvation. But filling is something that takes place over and over again. If believers think that being filled with the Holy Spirit is the same thing as being indwelt, they will miss a vital dynamic of their relationship with God.

We are never commanded to be indwelt or baptized by the Spirit but we are commanded to be filled (Ephesians 5:18). He indwells us and baptizes us once as a response to our initial faith in Christ; but He fills us repeatedly as we submit to Him on a daily basis. By failing to submit to the filling of the Spirit, many end up trying to do spiritual things in the flesh. The result is either a compromise with worldliness or the infusion of strife into the Body of Christ. 📖

There Is No Reason To Be Weak

When I was a young person I lived in a city and rode my bicycle all over town. I did not mind it, but the older I got the more I longed to drive a car. I can still see myself pedaling up a hill near my home and saying, "Boy, I can't wait to know what it is like to go up this hill in a car and not have to pedal so hard." The funny thing is that I go back to the same hill now and it does not seem very steep at all. Of course, now I am driving a car.

Similarly, many Christians live as though they are pedaling a bicycle. The inclines of life seem steep and make them weary. They do not realize that within them is a source of power that makes traveling through life much easier, like driving an automobile instead of riding a bike. It is so easy to sit in a car, touch the accelerator and engage the power source that is built inside. It is equally easy to engage the spiritual power source within us to successfully navigate the steepest inclines of life.

The believer's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, the built-in power source given to us by God. He dwells in those who belong to Christ. And, He dwells there permanently. One of the great promises He gave to us is found in Hebrews 13:5, "*I will never leave you nor forsake you.*" As we consider the significance of that promise, it is important to make note of the fact that this has not always been the happy lot of the saints.

The Holy Spirit did not always permanently reside in the lives of believers. Before the Church began, Old Testament saints had no guarantee of the Holy Spirit residing with them. He came and went at will. Sometimes He stayed a long time, sometimes He stayed only briefly. When he was absent from the lives of Old Testament believers, living their lives was just like pedaling a bicycle up hill -- much more difficult than touching the accelerator of an automobile.

I. OLD TESTAMENT EXAMPLES

Following are some examples of the relationship the Old Testament saints enjoyed with the Holy Spirit. When He was present with them, they handled the difficulties of life rather easily. But when He departed, life became very difficult.

1. Samson

God had promised Samson that as long as no razor touched the hair of his head he would be endowed with great strength. The strength did not come from his hair but from the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit provided the strength as long as Samson kept his vow concerning hair cuts.

In Judges 14, Samson became engaged to a Philistine girl named Timnath. On one of his journeys to visit her, he encountered a lion. Verses 5 and 6 say, "*Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath: and, behold, a young lion roared against him. And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him.*" What happened when the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him? He was able to take hold of that lion and literally tear him apart. This was the tremendous strength the Spirit of the Lord gave Samson when He came upon him.

A little later, the Philistines successfully tricked Samson by discovering the answer to a riddle through Samson's bride. After his wife's betrayal, the men attacked him and Judges 14:19 says, "*And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him.*" Now wait a minute, I thought the Spirit of the Lord had already come upon him earlier? If the Holy Spirit came upon him again, then obviously He had to have departed in the mean time. In fact, there were several times in which the Holy Spirit came upon Samson and then left again.

The departure of the Holy Spirit is definitely stated in Judges Chapter 16 after Samson unwittingly revealed his secret to Delilah. After his hair was cut, verse 20 says, "*And she said, the Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times, before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him.*" What happened? Weakness overcame Samson

because he did not have the power of the Spirit of God available to him. The power of the Spirit was not available because the Holy Spirit Himself had departed from the life of Samson.

2. King Saul

Saul was the reluctant one who did not really want to be king. Nevertheless, he was anointed and the Holy Spirit enabled him for the job. I Samuel 10:9 says, *“And it was so, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day. And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them.”* Like Samson, Saul had several experiences in which the Holy Spirit came upon him. But also like Samson, there is a definite statement about the Holy Spirit departing from him. In I Samuel 16:14 it says, *“But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul.”* When that occurred, weakness overcame Saul because he did not have the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling within him any more.

3. David

About the time that the Spirit of God was departing from Saul, He was taking up residence in David. David had a unique relationship with God in that he experienced something very different from most people in the Old Testament. I Samuel 16:13 says, *“Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David **from that day forward.**”*

From the time that David was a young person through the time of his becoming king and until many years later the Spirit of the Lord stayed with him. David learned the value of having the Holy Spirit with him all the time and panicked when he considered the possibility that He might leave. When he sinned with Bathsheba he prayed, *“Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me”* (Psalm 51:11). For David in the Old Testament, this was a real possibility.

Have you ever thought about what it would be like not to have the Spirit of God? In spite of the fact that we do not often think about His being with us, it would be horrible to think about His not being with us. After considering this prospect, we may not be so hard on the people in the Old Testament who often had to fend for themselves without the Holy Spirit dwelling in them.

Think of what it was like to be Samson, having to face the Philistines without the power of the Holy Spirit. Or to be King Saul and having to rule Israel, God’s chosen people, without God’s personal help. How alone, how helpless, how weak you would feel -- as they must have.

4. The Disciples

But then go to the Gospels and consider the disciples before the Old Testament was changed into the New Testament by the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. The disciples walked around with Jesus but apparently did not have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them because Jesus spoke of the coming of the Holy Spirit in the future tense. *“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive:) for the Holy Ghost was not yet given”* (John 7:37-39).

The disciples, except for Judas Iscariot, were saved men, but they did not have the Holy Spirit dwelling in their bodies. We often accuse the disciples of foolishness but

we might be more understanding of them if we consider their plight. When James and John asked Jesus for a special privilege in the Kingdom or to call judgement fire down from Heaven, they apparently did not have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them. When Peter opened his mouth to say something rash, he was apparently without the restraint of the Holy Spirit.

In John 20:21-22, Jesus gave the disciples the presence of His Spirit when he was about to ascend into Heaven. He said, "*Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, receive ye the Holy Ghost.*" Even this, however, was not permanent because it was only on the Day of Pentecost that the Holy Spirit took up permanent, guaranteed residence in the lives of the believers for the very first time.

II. THE NEW TESTAMENT DIFFERENCE

This leads us to the significance of the relationship New Testament believers have with God that goes beyond anything anyone ever experienced in the Old Testament, including David who had a long term indwelling. David always lived under the cloud of the possible departure of the Holy Spirit. Today, however, believers are promised He will never leave!

1. The Relationship

John 1:12 says, "*But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.*" Are you a son of God? You are if you have received Jesus Christ as your Savior. That means you have recognized that salvation is not based on what God does in you but on what God did for you in Christ. And, on the basis of faith in Christ and His work, you have received Him by believing the Gospel in your heart and confessing that belief with your mouth.

When you become a son of God by faith in Jesus Christ alone, then Galatians 4:6 becomes true, "*And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.*" If you have received Jesus Christ as your Savior you are a son and because you are a son, you have been given the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:9 goes a step further and teaches that if there is no Spirit of God in us there is no relationship with Jesus Christ. It says, "*But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*" In the Old Testament it was very different. The believers back then were the children of God even when the Spirit of God departed from them? They were secure in their salvation but sometimes they had to walk on their own here on earth. Sometimes they had to pedal the bicycle. They could not always engage the power source within them because it was not always there. But when God started the Church, this changed. He promised that when a person became a son He would give them His Spirit permanently. If you do not have the Spirit now, you are not a son. These two things are inseparable in the Body of Christ. If you are a son, you have the Spirit and He will never leave you or forsake you.

2. The Promise

With this wonderful relationship comes a wonderful promise. Hebrews 13:5 says, "*Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*" We have the promise that we will never experience what Samson did, having to face the enemy without the

Spirit of God. We will never be like Saul, having to lead God's people without the Spirit of the Lord. We will never have to pedal the bicycle because the internal source of power is always available.

God did promise Solomon of the Old Testament that He would never leave him (I Chronicles 28:20). But in this particular instance, the promise is qualified with a time factor. He said, "*Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the LORD God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, **until** thou has finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD.*" Solomon was about to undertake the task of building the Temple for God, and God assured Solomon of His presence until that particular job was completed.

Compare that to a promise that is given to New Testament believers in Ephesians 4:30 where Scripture says, "*And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed **unto** the day of redemption.*" This particular day of redemption is when our bodies are redeemed at the Rapture, when the dead in Christ are raised first and then we which are alive and remain are changed in a twinkling of an eye and this mortal, corruptible body puts on immortality and incorruption. As the Holy Spirit was given to Solomon until his task of building the Temple was complete, so New Testament believers in Christ are given the Holy Spirit until our lives are complete on earth. He keeps on working in us to build us up in Him until the day we go to heaven by death or by Rapture (Philippians 1:6). The Holy Spirit will stay with us until His work in us is complete and that takes as long as we live on earth.

Conclusion

Suppose Samson stood before God and God would ask, "Samson, why were you so weak?" Samson might properly say. "There were times when I had to pedal the bicycle because the Holy Spirit was not in me."

But what about you and me. Suppose we were to stand before God and God would ask, "Why did weakness overcome you?" What excuse would we give?

Because God is always with us, there is never an excuse for weakness to overcome us in the Christian life. In ourselves, we are weak, feeble, and finite. That is why Samson and King Saul and so many others in the Old Testament did such foolish things. But for Christians today, there is no reason that weakness should overcome us because the Holy Spirit indwells us permanently.

God said to Paul, "*My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength (God's strength) is made perfect in (your) weakness.*" Whose strength is that? God's! Whose weakness is that? Ours! God's strength is made perfect in our weakness. So Paul says, "*Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*"

Am I weak? Yes I am weak; but weakness does not have to overcome me. Why? Because God is in me. Always. He never leaves. He never forsakes. There is nothing His strength cannot handle regardless of how weak I may be. There is no excuse for going before Almighty God and saying, "I could not do that because I was weak." Remember, God said, "*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*" To recognize our weaknesses is not wrong but to be overcome by them is unnecessary.

There is only one exception to this rule. You cannot know the power of God unless you receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. "*As many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God.*" "*And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts.*" Without being a child of God through

faith in Jesus Christ, there is no access to the power of the Holy Spirit.

Have you ever received Jesus as your Savior? Can you identify that moment in your life when you confessed to God:

“There isn’t anything in me that can save me; but what You did in Jesus Christ for me can save me. He bore my sin. He bore my iniquity. He bore all that I have done to offend You. Not only did He bear it but He paid for it with His blood and He buried it in the grave, and He sealed it there forever, and He left it behind when He came out of the grave and I believe that satisfied You for all my sin. I receive Jesus now. I welcome Him into my life as my Savior.”

If you have never done that before, I encourage you to do it now. As long as you fail to receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, you are going to be pedaling that bicycle up the hills of life, in your own strength. And the hills will get steeper and longer and you will never reach the top. Eventually, you will slide all the way into the horrible pit of Hell. But if you receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, you will become a child of God. And as a child of God you will be given the Holy Spirit of God and He will dwell within you and give you His power for every hill you may face in life. Though you will be weak in yourself, with Him in you, unlimited power will be available to you. 📖

The Holy Spirit Seals and Sanctifies

The sealing and sanctifying ministries of the Holy Spirit correspond to two important truths in the Christian life. One is eternal security and the other is a life of holiness.

Many in the Christian community believe it is possible for a child of God to lose his salvation. This is believed to happen in two different ways: (1) a person might commit a sin so serious that God is compelled to remove him from the Book of Life; or, (2) a person might choose to give up on his faith and remove himself from the Book Of Life. The sealing ministry of the Holy Spirit contradicts this false doctrine.

Many other Christians believe it is possible for a child of God to become completely holy on earth so that he no longer sins. John Wesley was the first to suggest something on this order which he called Christian perfection. The proposal is that a believer may achieve a state of perfection in his heart so that sin is completely expelled and absolute holiness takes its place. Mistakes might still occur after this, but not sin. Biblical teaching on the sanctifying ministry of the Holy Spirit clearly contradicts this false doctrine as well.

I. THE SEALING MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Two verses of Scripture state that believers in Christ are sealed with the Holy Spirit.

“Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” II Corinthians 1:21-22

“In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance...”
Ephesians 1:13,14

To understand what it means to be sealed with the Holy Spirit, it is important to look first at the word “*earnest*.” The word earnest means “down payment.” The earnest of the Holy Spirit means that the entrance of the Holy Spirit into the body of a believer serves as a down payment for the inheritance he has been promised in Christ. This indwelling of the Spirit is God’s pledge that He will also give us everything else He has promised us in Christ. It is the same concept as making a down payment on a mortgage at a bank. The down payment is the earnest, or the promise, to pay all the rest of the mortgage. We can only imagine all that is part of our inheritance in Christ, but we know that we will receive it because of the down payment He has made with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

When the Holy Spirit is given to us as a down payment of our inheritance, God uses this to place His seal upon our lives.

1. What the Seal Is.

A seal in Biblical times served the same purpose as a signature does today. Special rings were made with raised insignias attached that served as identifying emblems. Each insignia was unique so that whenever a particular emblem was seen, it would immediately be known to whom it belonged.

To place a “signature” on an item, they would use a lit candle to drop a little wet wax onto the item and then press the insignia of the ring into the soft wax, leaving an impression. In Bible times, it was often true that once a document was sealed or signed by a King’s insignia, the matter addressed in the document could not be reversed or changed.

2. The Effect of the Seal

An example of this is found in the Book of Esther, chapter three. Haman convinced King Ahasuerus to place his seal upon a death warrant for all the Jews in his kingdom. When the King discovered that the Queen was a Jew and that Haman had tricked him into signing a death warrant for his own wife, there was nothing he could do to cancel the order. The only way he could compensate was to issue a second order giving the Jewish people the right to defend themselves.

A similar incident occurred in Daniel chapter six when the King issued a decree that no prayers were to be offered to anyone but himself for thirty days. Daniel violated the rule, but the King did not want to punish him. However, since the King’s signature authenticated the decree, it could not be altered, and Daniel had to be thrown into the Lion’s den.

This is the concept of the sealing ministry of the Holy Spirit. With the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, God places His signature upon our lives. This authenticates our membership in the Body of Christ which cannot be reversed or changed in any way. When Scripture says we are sealed with the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption, it is a fact that can never be erased. We are God’s forever because He has sealed us with His signature. Isn’t this wonderful? This is security -- the security of the signature of God authenticating our salvation and sealing it forever.

II. THE SANCTIFYING MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Several verses of Scripture refer to the sanctifying ministry of the Holy Spirit. For example:

“But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.”

II Thessalonians 2:13

“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ...”

I Peter 1:2

1. The Meaning of Sanctification

While cleansing sin from our lives is related to the concept of sanctification, the specific application of this word to the Christian has a different focus. This can be observed in how the word was used before sin existed.

In Genesis chapter two, Adam and Eve had not yet sinned. The curse had not yet come upon the earth so nothing had to be cleaned up or corrected. God placed His stamp of approval on all creation by seeing that everything He had made was very good.

In this context, Scripture records that God **“sanctified”** the seventh day.

“Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.

And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made: and he

rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And

*God blessed the seventh day, **and sanctified it:** because that in it he had*

rested from all his work which God created and made.” Genesis 2:1-3

What does Scripture mean when it says that God sanctified the seventh day? There was no sin and nothing needed to be cleansed. By sanctifying the seventh day, God assigned it to a specific purpose. It was designated as a special day in which people would take their minds off the cares of the earth and turn their minds to the Lord.

The word sanctification is also used in this sense even after sin came into the world. One example is found in Exodus 29:38-46. Verses 42, 43 say, *“This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord: where I will meet you, to speak there unto thee. And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory.”* The tabernacle was assigned the specific purpose of being the place where man would meet with God.

2. Sanctification and Holiness

When something is sanctified, or set apart for a specific purpose, it is not to be used for anything else. That is the full sense of sanctification. In relation to sanctification, holiness refers to a consistent adherence to the purpose for which something has been set apart.

Christians are admonished to live holy lives. This is because the Holy Spirit sanctifies us, or assigns us to specific responsibilities, at the moment of our salvation. A holy life is a consistent fulfillment of those responsibilities to which we have been set apart by the Holy Spirit.

There are actually many things for which we have been sanctified in Christ. Some of these include being the temple of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 6:19-20), being ambassadors for Christ (II Cor. 5:20), keeping God’s commandments (I John 5:3), keeping oneself unspotted from the world (James 1:27; Romans 12:1-2), and fulfilling the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2).

Honoring this sanctification is a primary responsibility of the Christian life. I Thess. 4:1-3 says, “*Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour.*” It is the will of God that Christians be set apart to specific responsibilities. It is therefore the will of God that His children avoid those things which are inconsistent with the responsibilities to which they have been assigned. Verse six says “*that no man go beyond.*” Beyond what? Beyond the specific purpose for which we have been designated by the Spirit. If we go beyond our sanctification, verse six says God avenges us, because, in verse seven, “*God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.*” God has called us to consistently fulfill the purposes to which He assigned us by the Holy Spirit when He saved us.

3. A Perpetual Project

Our sanctification is something that we possess from the moment we are saved to the moment we go to heaven. We are set apart to the specific responsibilities outlined for the Christian life as long as we live on earth.

When we are first saved, we are not very skilled at fulfilling our sanctification. As we grow in Christ, our skills develop little by little, and we gradually increase in holiness, or in a consistency of fulfilling our assigned responsibilities. This gradual increase in holiness is sometimes referred to as progressive sanctification.

The question is, do we ever achieve in this life the ability to flawlessly fulfill our sanctification (otherwise known as ultimate sanctification)? Scripture clearly says, “No.” Groaning from sin lasts as long as we live on this earth (Romans 8:22). The human body was made subject to vanity (Romans 8:20) and remains mortal and corrupt until the rapture/resurrection event (I Corinthians 15:51-54). The struggle between the flesh and the spirit is a perpetual struggle (Romans 7:15-17), but thankfully, Christ intercedes for us (Hebrews 7:25), and God is always faithful, forgiving us when we confess our sins before Him (I John 1:9). This work of progressive sanctification is performed in the life of the believer his entire life on earth (Philippians 1:6). Only when we are raptured/resurrected from the earth do we obtain an incorruptible body with sin completely removed from our being (I Corinthians 15:54; Revelation 21:4) which is our ultimate sanctification.

Conclusion

By receiving Jesus Christ as Savior, we qualify to receive God’s signature upon our lives. When we are sealed with the Holy Spirit at the moment of our salvation, God places His signature upon our lives, authenticating our membership in the Body of Christ, which can never be reversed by any means. As a result of this seal, we enjoy the guarantee of eternal life with God. We belong to Him. We are eternally secure. And nothing can ever change this.

When we are sanctified by the Holy Spirit, we are set apart for specific purposes in Christ. During our entire life on earth, we are to seek to fulfill those purposes as consistently as we can. How well we fulfill our sanctification depends a lot on how well we submit to the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We can quench the Spirit (I Thessalonians 5:19), and live carnal lives (I Corinthians 3:1-3). Or, we can yield the

various parts of our bodies to the Holy Spirit as instruments of righteousness (Romans 6:12-18), and live holy lives. The choice is ours.

Jesus paid for our sin, He removed the penalty of death, He destroyed the bondage of sin, and He gave us His seal, the security of knowing we belong to Him forever. Nothing can take that away from us. As God's children, we have the wonderful privilege of being set apart to His purposes. But He left it up to us as to how diligently we would pursue those purposes. It is a life-long project and it is a difficult project. But with the help of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit, it is possible for us to develop a consistency in fulfilling the responsibilities to which we have been assigned. We will never do it flawlessly, but we can constantly improve in our efforts until the day we leave the earth.📖

The Holy Spirit And Spiritual Gifts

There has been a lot said about spiritual gifts in modern times and the subject has been developed with great complexity. It has been analyzed, systematized, and refined to such a degree that often the emphasis on the Holy Spirit is lost altogether, and spiritual gifts are watered down to mere human works for God.

The intent of spiritual gifts is simply this: ***The Spirit of God works through individual believers in specific ways to supply what is needed by other members***

of the Body of Christ. The entire focus is on the work of the Holy Spirit, not on the work of human beings. Human beings who belong to Christ are merely instruments in the hands of the Spirit to accomplish His work. To honor a human being for how marvelously he uses his spiritual gift utterly contradicts the concept.

Yet a popular definition of spiritual gifts is “a God given ability for service,” which makes it sound like God gives His children skills or talents and then sends them off to do the work on their own. In contrast to this, I Corinthians 12:7 says it is “*the manifestation of the Spirit*” that is given to every believer. What does that big word “manifestation” mean? It means a showing forth or a demonstration of something. Thus, the manifestation of the Spirit is the showing forth, or the demonstration of the Holy Spirit. The concept of spiritual gifts involves the activity of the Holy Spirit Himself as He works through each believer's life.

I. THE APPLICATION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

1. All believers are included.

Every person that is born again (and thus indwelt by the Spirit of God and baptized into the body of Christ by the Spirit of God) is given spiritual gifts. If you can testify concerning a time in your life when you recognized you were a sinner, lost and condemned to Hell without any ability of your own to merit the acceptance of God, and when you, therefore, believed what Jesus Christ did on the cross for you was sufficient to satisfy God so that you received Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, you have received spiritual gifts. No one with such a testimony is excluded.

I Corinthians 12:1 addresses the chapter to believers, calling them “brethren.” Verse 7 says, “*The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man.*” How many believers does this include? All of them.

I Peter 4:10 repeats the same thing, “*As every man hath received the gift...*” Every one of us has been included in the distribution of spiritual gifts, which is the activity of the Holy Spirit through the life of believers. If you are part of the body of Christ, if you are born again, if you are a saved individual, if you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit you have been included in the distribution of spiritual gifts.

Imagine a one hundred bed hospital in which every bed is full. The staff of this hospital includes one nurse and one doctor and no one else. Not one for each shift, but one nurse and one doctor to care for all 100 patients 24 hours each day, seven days each week. I have been in the hospital several times with kidney stones, one episode of which lasted twenty days. For most of those days I experienced excruciating pain and required a great deal of care from the doctors, nurses, nurses assistants, and all the other staff members. In fact, every time I have been in the hospital to stay or to visit, I have noticed that nurses, and nurses aids and orderlies, and every type of hospital personnel are all over the place constantly caring for the patients. It seems like every 3 ½ minutes someone is in your room taking your pulse, taking your temperature, taking your blood pressure or helping you in one way or another. Even at night, they constantly check on you and make sure your every need is met. Well, imagine that you are one of these 100 patients in a hospital where there is only one nurse and one doctor to care for all of them. What kind of care would you get? You say that is ridiculous. A hospital could not operate like that. No one would get the care they need.

Translate this picture into the context of the Church. In a church with 100 members, how many people do you expect to be involved in meeting the needs of the people? You might say the Pastor is hired to do that job. Or, the Elders and Deacons

are elected to care for the people. But if it takes a large staff of personnel to care for people's physical needs in a hospital, it takes an equally large number of workers to care for the spiritual needs of a church family. It is unreasonable to expect one or a few to accomplish such an immense task. This is why the Holy Spirit manifests Himself through **every** member of the Body of Christ. All believers are part of the staff of the Church and designed to be used by the Holy Spirit in fulfilling its needs.

2. The Spirit Does the Work.

I Corinthians 12:9-10 gives a list of different ways in which the Holy Spirit manifests Himself in the lives of believers. Then verse 11 says, "*But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.*" The word severally does not mean several as in many but severing as in dividing. It refers to the Holy Spirit's distribution of His gifts. This verse teaches that the Holy Spirit decides how He will manifest Himself through each believer and to whom He will distribute each type of manifestation according to this choice. The Spirit of God may manifest Himself through any individual in more than one way. In fact, each believer has the potential of being used by the Holy Spirit in any one of the ministries of the Holy Spirit if He deems it necessary at the time. This is because the work is not dependent upon the developed skills of the believer, but on the divine skills of the Holy Spirit. It does appear, however, that once He chooses to manifest Himself through an individual believer in a particular way that He consistently does so throughout that believer's life. This makes it possible for the individual believer to grow ever more comfortable in cooperating with the Holy Spirit in manifesting specific ministries.

For example, pastoring is one of the manifestations of the Holy Spirit. We use "pastor" as a title today, but Scripture never refers to it in this way. Elder is the Biblical title for spiritual leaders in the church and to some Elders God grants the manifestation of pastoring as the way the Holy Spirit expresses Himself through their lives. Certainly, not every Christian is used in this way, not even all Elders are used for pastoral ministries; but when the Holy Spirit chooses to manifest Himself through a particular man in pastoring people, He continues that manifestation throughout the man's life on earth.

I believe the Holy Spirit has chosen to manifest Himself through me with this ministry of pastoring. And I have believed this since I was 15 years old, although at that age I had no idea what he had in mind. I originally thought it was just something He called **me** to do for Him. So I went to Bible College, trained for the ministry and went out to pastor churches. In the early years of my ministry, however, pastoring did not seem to go very well. In fact, I was doing so poorly that I almost stopped believing God wanted me to be a Pastor. Then one day I stopped trying to be a Pastor. I began to pursue administrative ministries and I found myself relaxing in my personal relationship with God. When I stopped trying to do the Holy Spirit's work for Him and began letting Him have His way in my life through the Word of God, He started using me to pastor people. At first, I did not realize what was happening. Then one day I heard an old missionary say that all the modern systemization of spiritual gifts had stifled the real ministry of the Holy Spirit. All of a sudden it dawned on me what had been happening in my own life. Spiritual gifts are not abilities that God miraculously injects into a believer's life which he is then expected to do on his own for God. Spiritual gifts are the specific ways the Holy Spirit manifests **Himself** through the lives of individual believers. As long as I tried to do the work for God, it did not get done very well. But when the Holy Spirit had the opportunity through my submission to use me any way He wanted to, opportunities abounded for Him to pastor people through me.

3. The Holy Spirit Manifests Himself Primarily in Two Ways.

I Peter 4:11 indicates the two basic ways in which the Spirit of God manifests Himself through the lives of believers. *"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth."* Sometimes the Spirit of God manifests Himself with speaking ministries. Other times He manifests Himself with serving ministries. The lists of spiritual gifts as they are given in Romans, Corinthians and Ephesians all may be separated into these two categories. For example, teaching, exhorting, and prophesying, are speaking manifestations of the Holy Spirit, while giving and showing mercy are serving manifestations. And yes, this verse does say we are to minister according to the **ability** which God gives. This does not contradict the idea that the gift is actually the work of the Holy Spirit through a believer, but affirms that we are not just robots moved around like miniature caricatures. With all our personality and natural talent, we are to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the work He desires to do through us.

II. THE EFFECT OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Spiritual gifts are not intended for personal gratification. I Peter 4:10 says, "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same **one to another.**" I Corinthians 12:7 says, "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man **to profit withal.**" One to another and profit withal define the purpose of spiritual gifts as the benefitting of others rather than of self. Whatever way the Spirit of God chooses to show Himself through you, it is so He can meet some need in another person's life, not in your own.

There is one statement about one spiritual gift that makes it sound like it was to be used for personal benefit. I Corinthians 14:4 says, "He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself." But a proper examination of the context indicates this statement is a rebuke, not a positive suggestion about the use of a spiritual gift. The entire verse says, "He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; **but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.**" The use of tongues was intended as a sign to unbelieving Jews that the Gospel of Jesus Christ was genuine revelation. Some were abusing the practice of speaking in tongues by using it as an ecstatic experience for personal gratification. God said this was wrong. It was better if they put tongues away altogether and participated in plain speaking because the purpose of spiritual gifts is not selfish, but designed to benefit the lives of others. Besides, tongues speaking was only a temporary gift and would soon fade away altogether, and God did not want its final days to be distorted by being used as a device for unrighteous purposes.

Imagine yourself coming out of a mall and discovering that the battery in your car has gone dead and your car will not start. As you are wondering what to do, a truck just happens to drive by that is labeled "Friendly Frank's Auto Repair."

You flag down the driver and ask, "Sir, would you happen to have a pair of jumper cables?"

Looking at you skeptically, he says, "Yes, I have a pair of jumper cables in the back of the truck."

You ask again, "Would you jump my car?" He replies, "No."

Now, he has exactly what you need. And, you thought mechanics were supposed to help people with car troubles. But he refuses to help.

So next you ask, "Well, may I borrow your jumper cables if I can

find someone else to jump my car.”

He answers, “No, these jumper cables are for me in case my truck breaks down.”

How would that make you feel? You are in the middle of a sea of hundreds of cars. The person closest to you has the ability to meet your need and he is unwilling to do so because he has reserved his talents and equipment for his own benefit.

Unfortunately, this all too well describes the state of the Body of Christ. The people closest to us have the greatest ability to meet our needs if they would simply submit to the work the Holy Spirit wants to do through them. But too many are unwilling to cooperate. They are obsessed with making their own lives comfortable and have no interest in being used to help others.

III. MY PART CONCERNING SPIRITUAL GIFTS

1. Neglect not the gift.

If spiritual gifts consist of the work which the Holy Spirit does through me, is there anything for me to do personally? Or may I just sit back and watch? I Timothy 4:14 says, “*Neglect not the gift that is in thee.*” But if the Holy Spirit is the One who does the work, how can I be guilty of neglecting it?

To neglect something means to consider it to be unimportant and unworthy of our attention. Many Christians rarely think about the presence of the Spirit of God in their lives and consequently do not think about His desire to work through them. Before any believer can be effective in the use of spiritual gifts, he must first raise his consciousness concerning the Spirit's presence. Each day we rise from our beds and look in the mirror, we must remind ourselves that we are temples for the Holy Spirit. And with the consciousness of His presence awakened within us, we must also remind ourselves that the Holy Spirit actually wants to use us to accomplish some spiritual work.

The Holy Spirit is an active person and He is not satisfied simply to sit still. He saves us, He indwells us, and then He wants to use us. We must not consider this desire of His to be unimportant and thus ignore the Holy Spirit. I Corinthians 12:22 says that even the feeble and less honorable members of the Body of Christ are ***necessary*** and that every member should have the same care for one another, regardless of their apparent status. This means the Holy Spirit wants to use the feeble and uncomely parts of the Body as much as the honorable and comely ones.

The Holy Spirit wants to use every believer, not just a few visible people, to benefit other believers. Pastoring people is no more important than any of His other activities. The person whom the Holy Spirit can use to help a neighbor run errands, or to show mercy to a friend who needs sympathy is just as vital to His work as the Pastor He uses to preach a rousing sermon.

Some years ago I had transmission troubles on my car. Not being a mechanic, my understanding of what could be wrong was extremely limited. I was sure I would need the services of a transmission specialist and have to pay a very high repair bill. As it turned out the problem was very simply resolved. There was a little gadget connected to the carburetor that was also connected to the transmission which was supposed to tell the transmission when to shift gears. A little round plastic clip kept this gadget connected to the carburetor. As it turned out, the little plastic clip had fallen off and that was the whole trouble.

You might feel like a little plastic clip in the church of Jesus Christ, small and

insignificant. But if you ignore the Holy Spirit and He cannot use you, something vital will be missing in the life of the church. This is referred to in I Thessalonians 5:19 as quenching the Spirit. Quenching the Holy Spirit and neglecting the gift are definitely related.

2. Stir up the gift.

II Timothy 1:6 says, "*Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee.*" How do we stir up the gift of the Holy Spirit? The word "stir up" refers to pumping air on a fire with a bellows or some similar instrument. The additional oxygen from that air causes the fire to burn more intensely. In relation to the Holy Spirit this refers to making yourself available for His use. Your submission becomes the oxygen that allows the Holy Spirit to intensify His manifestation through you. Instead of trying to do things for God on your own, you must submit the members of your body to the Holy Spirit as instruments of righteousness so that He may use them to manifest Himself and accomplish His work. Romans 6:13b says, "*Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.*" This is necessary because of what Philippians 2:13 says, "*For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*"

You do not have to have special talents. You do not have to have special abilities. You do not have to be highly intelligent. You do not have to have an extroverted personality. You do not have to be a bubbly individual. You can be just plain old you. But when plain old you is an available instrument in the hands of the Holy Spirit, there is no limit to the possibilities of what He might accomplish through your life. Just make yourself available to the Holy Spirit and let Him do His work. God will work through you and accomplish His purposes.

God told the Corinthian believers that he used the foolish among them to confound the wise, the weak to confound the mighty, the base and despised, and things which are not to bring to nought the things which are. And regardless of any believer's natural human talents, the Holy Spirit is capable of using the raw material of his life to perform spiritual activity that is beneficial to the entire Body of Christ.

Conclusion

There are several contexts in which we must make ourselves available to the Holy Spirit. One is the context in which believers gather together in one place. The next time you prepare to attend a church service or some other gathering of believers, submit yourself to the Holy Spirit in the following way,

Dear God, when I am with other believers, I make myself available for your use in affecting someone else's life. Connect me with another believer and use me to encourage, to strengthen, to help. I give you my mouth that You may say the words that are just what they need to hear. I give you my ears that I may listen to someone who needs to talk. I give you my heart to be understanding and to comfort those who need it. I give you my smile that I may help a visitor feel welcome. I give you my hands that I may greet someone with a hearty handshake, or open a door, or pick up something that has dropped to the floor. I give you my attitudes that you might use me to set an atmosphere of humility and reverence.

Another context has to do with our day to day relationship with other believers. We are not always together as in church services, but we are always in need of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit desires to use us just as much between gathering times as during them. Yet some believers have absolutely no contact with other believers outside the context of church services. Perhaps you could use your church directory throughout the week and consider for whom the Holy Spirit might use you to minister. Prepare yourself for such a ministry by praying the following:

Dear God, whom would You like to use me to encourage by

1. Sending them a card?
2. Paying them a visit?
3. Offering them a listening ear on the telephone?
4. Praying for them?
5. Sharing some truth God has recently taught me?
6. Offering to run errands for them?
7. Changing the oil in their car?
8. Or in any other creative way You might think of?

These examples focus on what appear to be the lesser spiritual gifts of helps, ministry and showing mercy, but the more visible gifts are also possible ways in which the Holy Spirit might use us in some very practical ways. Evangelists are not just those who preach in crusades to large numbers, but ordinary Christians whom the Holy Spirit uses to witness to a co-worker, a neighbor, or the person you happen to be next to in the line at a check-out counter. He might also use us to teach Bible truths to our fellow Christians, or to our family in personal study times or sitting around the dinner table. Whether or not we are called to preach, we can still be used of the Spirit to proclaim the truth and edify one another.

When you consciously think about the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life and about His desire to use you to manifest His work for the benefit of others, and when you make yourself available to the Holy Spirit to be used in this way, your life will take on purpose and meaning in ways you never imagined possible. So many look for things that make them feel like they are worth something. They seek to accomplish great feats that raise their self esteem. They crave to be applauded and praised for how well they have performed. But when you lose your life for Christ's sake and yield yourself as a mere instrument in the hands of the Holy Spirit, and you see Him use your life to truly benefit the lives of others, you will soon realize that your life has more value than it ever could have by any other means.📖

The Holy Spirit Has Discontinued Some Spiritual Gifts

The use of tongues in the Church today has created a strong division between Christians. Charismatic Christians believe speaking in tongues is a crucial experience in their pursuit of God. Many non-charismatic Christians believe the legitimate use of tongues terminated with the age of the Apostles and is an unbiblical practice.

The Bible clearly states that the Holy Spirit gave miraculous gifts in the early church. These included speaking in tongues as well as prophecy, knowledge and miracles. To settle the modern charismatic controversy, we must be able to determine whether or not the Holy Spirit chooses to manifest himself in these same spectacular ways today. If one accepts the literal meaning of the words of Scripture, the issue can be settled. The following pages explain how.

I. The Power Of God

One of the standard criticisms of those of us who do not believe in the use of tongues for today is that we deny or, at least, question the power of God to perform miracles. If the Holy Spirit wants someone to speak in tongues or perform some other miracle, who are we to say that God cannot do so? The truth is we do not say God “cannot.” We say He “does not”; and there is a significant difference between these two things.

We acknowledge that God has unlimited power to do whatever He wishes. We also acknowledge the truthfulness of all the miracles recorded in the word of God. He created everything out of nothing. He parted the waters of the sea, healed the sick, and

brought the dead back to life. We also acknowledge that occasionally, God does some things today which seem extra-ordinary. God is indeed quite capable of performing any miracle He chooses to perform and we are happy to acknowledge this truth.

What we do not acknowledge is that the Holy Spirit chooses to perform miracles through human agents today. The operative word is “choice,” rather than “ability.” The miraculous spiritual gifts disappeared from the Church a long time ago because the Holy Spirit decided to stop distributing them. God is able to do anything He wants to do, but He does not always choose to do what He is able to do.

History demonstrates that God has chosen to perform miracles through human agents only at select times. Moses, Elijah and the Disciples all were used to perform miracles. But Adam, Abraham and Jeremiah were not. Consider Abraham. He is called the father of all those who exercise faith in God. He was the beneficiary of a miraculous birth for his son Isaac, but he himself never performed one miracle. Why would a man of such great faith not be given the ability to perform miracles? It certainly would have been advantageous in some of the circumstances he faced. The fact is God simply did not choose to perform miracles through Abraham. He performed one (and only one) for Abraham, but none through him.

Consider another example. David was indwelt by the Holy Spirit as a shepherd boy at the moment he was anointed to be the next king of Israel. In addition, Scripture says the Spirit of the LORD remained with him “*from that day forward*” (1 Samuel 16:13). Yet David never once spoke in tongues or performed any miracles.

There are many examples to show that God does not always utilize his miracle producing power to accomplish his purposes. That is the case today. God may occasionally perform some extra-ordinary things for individuals, but he is not using men to do miraculous things through the gifts of the Spirit.

II. The Experience of Man

One of the hardest things to refute, however, is a person’s experience. People really do speak in tongues. They experience this phenomenon in situations where they are invoking the name of God and are “worshiping” Him. They even give credit to the Holy Spirit for their experience. So how can anyone say it is not real when it is actually happening?

We do not question that it is real, but we do question that it is right. Just attaching the name of Christ to an activity or giving the Spirit credit for it does not make it right. Jesus himself testified that some people would perform real miracles in His name but He would not recognize such things as valid (Matthew 7:21-23). Just because a person has experienced something does not mean it is legitimate.

Experience can never be the gauge by which activities may be measured correctly. This would be like using a student’s answers to test questions to grade his own test. He would always score 100% because he would always agree with himself. Similarly, there is a serious flaw in saying that our experience proves the validity of our experience. There has to be a higher standard than our experience to determine the value of our activities. In fact, there is. The standard is the truth recorded in the Word of God. If anything we experience does not agree with Scripture, then something is wrong with our experience, not with the Bible.

III. The Discontinuance of Tongues, Prophecy and Knowledge

God's Word has some very specific things to say about the tenure of tongues, prophecy and knowledge as spiritual gifts, the most important of which is in I Corinthians 13.

8. Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

9. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

10. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

11. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

12. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

Verse 8

By saying that Charity never fails, God says that Agape love never comes to an end. There is never a time when it ceases, so that a husband or wife ought never to say "I don't love you anymore." If you have covenanted together a pledge of divine love, that is something which has no ending point.

To illustrate this, God chooses to contrast unfailing love with things that do have an ending point: three spiritual gifts -- prophecies, tongues, and knowledge.

Verse 10

God qualified the ending point of these spiritual gifts as the moment when "that which is perfect is come." This then is the key statement regarding the tenure of tongues, and other spiritual gifts, such as prophecy and knowledge, specifically designed to communicate direct revelation from God.

Verse 9

Each of these spiritual gifts provided New Testament Truth to the infant Church. These early believers needed the same revelation that we need today. We have the whole New Testament in print, they did not. In fact, some of the New Testament had not even been written yet. So gifts of knowledge and prophecy, in particular, and tongues in a less direct way, provided these truths to local congregations for their edification. The limitation of these gifts was that they could only provide small parts of the New Testament at any given time. This left the first century believers with the privilege of hearing parts of the New Testament, but without the means of reviewing all Scriptural truth at will. The word "part" is significant to understanding this passage.

Verse 10

The word "but" indicates that verse 10 is intended to stand in contrast to verse 9. Verse 9 speaks of that which is in "part." Verse 10 speaks of that which is "perfect." Thus "part" and "perfect" are opposites. The word part we can understand easily enough. It is something that is incomplete. The meaning of the word perfect is also clear in these verses as it represents the opposite of that which is incomplete, referring to that which is complete.

If verse 9 is talking about spiritual gifts that communicate parts of the New Testament, or parts of the Word of God, then verse 10 is talking about the completed

Word of God. Thus when the Word of God is completed, by the writing down of all the New Testament, then the spiritual gifts which communicated parts of the Word of God would be done away. Who needs pieces when you can have the whole thing?

Verse 11

For further clarification, two illustrations are given. The first in verse 11, compares the spiritual gifts of prophecy, tongues and knowledge with childish ways of speaking, understanding and thinking. The connection is obvious -- children lack the information they need to function on a mature level. Their knowledge is partial and incomplete. Once a person's education and development are complete, he can lay aside the insufficient tools of childhood and conduct himself like a mature adult.

This illustrates what is to take place when the Word of God is complete and available to the Church in written form. The spiritual gifts which conveyed parts of the Word orally would be discontinued. They were tools of an infant church that would no longer be needed. All the truth they needed would be provided in the form of Scripture.

Verse 12

The second illustration in verse 12, speaks of looking at one self in a mirror. The mirrors used in the first century were not crystal clear as the ones we use today. When one peered at himself in a mirror, he could see only an incomplete reflection of himself. So it was that by hearing revelation through those who prophesied, spoke words of knowledge, or communicated truth by means of speaking in tongues in conjunction with an interpreter, a Christian could have only an incomplete understanding of truth. (Now I know in part.)

"But **then** shall I know even as also I am known." When? When that which is perfect is come. When the Word of God is complete, I will be able to see the whole truth and understand how all its parts fit together in the same way that another person can look directly at me and see exactly what I look like.

What this passage is not saying.

There are many well meaning Bible students who interpret this passage to say that "that which is perfect is come" is referring to the return of Christ, because He is the perfect one. When He returns, they say, my understanding will be opened up so that I will never again have to walk about in the fog of an imperfect mirror.

If this is so, then tongues would certainly be for today. However, nothing about this word "perfect" suggests such an interpretation. The context as we have shown leads to a different conclusion. The meaning of the word might suggest a reference to Christ if it is interpreted as referring to something that is flawless. But, perfect clearly stands in opposition to something that is incomplete, and not something that is imperfect. Even the parts of the New Testament that were communicated through prophecy, tongues and knowledge were flawless. They just were not complete. Besides, the gender of the word in this context is neuter, and Christ is never in any other place in Scripture referred to with a neuter term.

This passage is definitely not a reference to the return of Christ, nor to the effect it will have on the understanding of a believer.

IV. Other Reasons Tongues, Prophecy and Knowledge Were Discontinued

There are other reasons to believe that prophecy, tongues, and knowledge are

not for today.

(1) Tongues had a very specific purpose as a sign to unbelieving Jews that this new revelation was truly the Word of God (I Corinthians 14:22). Thus tongues had no intrinsic value to the church other than as a tool of evangelism.

(2) When Scripture says that a person who speaks in tongues edifies himself, this is a criticism not a compliment (I Corinthians 14:2-4). It in no way suggests that tongues were to be used in private devotions, because the context of these verses is public worship. Those who spoke in tongues were not to do so without an interpreter present, because everything in a worship service is to be directed toward edifying the group, and directed away from a performance that benefited an individual.

(3) The crucial issue, though, in the debate over prophecy, tongues, and knowledge involves the closure of divine revelation for our age. Does Scripture represent the entirety of truth for our age? Or, is God still communicating parts of truth through spiritual gifts?

To believe that tongues are for today is to believe that the Bible is incomplete and therefore insufficient. It is to believe that we need more than the Bible to know God and to serve Him adequately.

To believe that the Bible is the complete body of truth God intends to provide for us in this age requires that any means by which additional revelation is communicated be rendered invalid. Regardless of what man experiences, truth always takes precedence. If what man is doing does not agree with what God has said, then it is not difficult to figure out which one is wrong.

The disagreement over the use of tongues goes far beyond a mere denominational distinctive. It is a matter of grave doctrinal difference. It is serious enough to believe that those who deny the completion of revelation and participate in pseudo spiritual gifts, which purport to communicate extra-biblical truth, are guilty of disorderly conduct and should be excluded from the fellowship of obedient believers according to II Thessalonians 3:6-9, and 14-15. Among those who believe in the use of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge today may be genuine believers who should be caused to question the validity of their practices by our unwillingness to fellowship with them. To treat them as obedient brethren, only just a little different than we are, would be to encourage them in their error.

V. The Discontinuance of Miracles

Miracles have always been used to confirm the truth of a message from God. Every context in which miracles are recorded in Scripture bears this out. Thus, miracles were used for precisely this purpose in the earthly ministry of Christ and in the ministry of his disciples in establishing the New Testament. Hebrews 2:3-4 says that our great salvation "*at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost...*"


Once the New Testament was established as revelation from God, the work of confirmation was no longer necessary. The Holy Spirit stopped manifesting Himself in the Church through miracles about the same time He stopped distributing the gifts of tongues, prophecy and knowledge. The revelation was given, the New Testament was complete in its written form, it was confirmed to be the inspired Word of God, and the miraculous gifts used to communicate it and confirm it were no longer needed.

Conclusion

Charismatic Christians who believe in the use of tongues and other miracle gifts today typically believe also that speaking in tongues is the visible proof that the Holy Spirit has indwelt a believer. They also tend to believe that this experiential reception of the Spirit occurs some time after salvation and is an event distinct from the rebirth. But the Bible teaches that receiving the Holy Spirit is an event that takes place at the very moment of salvation (see chapter two). In addition, the Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit does not choose to manifest Himself today through the spectacular gifts of tongues, prophecy, knowledge, and miracles because the Word of God is complete and has been sufficiently confirmed to be divine revelation. Thus, the Charismatic movement is founded on false doctrine.

There is also a serious side effect of this false doctrine. It has the potential to confuse some who follow it and cause them to doubt their salvation. To the Charismatics, experience is a vital part of the affirmation of their relationship with God. Without the experience of speaking in tongues confirming the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives, it is very possible that some may repent over and over again seeking something they already possess. It also has the potential leading some to place their faith in something other than the Gospel of Jesus Christ, making them depend upon experientialism as the means of their acceptance before God.

The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the full gospel. When a person understands that he is a lost sinner and receives the gospel by faith, he is redeemed, forgiven, justified, sanctified, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit all in a single moment. At the very moment of salvation, a person gets everything God has promised. As we learn more and more of the truth through our study of Scripture, we learn how to appropriate more and more of what we possess in Christ. It is very important that we Christians never let our experience lead us into an activity which contradicts the truth. Neither should we let the experience of others confuse us about what the Scripture says.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are practical, not bazaar. Even the spectacular gifts manifested at specific times in the history of God's people had practical purposes. The Holy Spirit is quite capable of manifesting Himself in these same spectacular ways today as He did then, but the Bible teaches that for now and for the remainder of the Church age, He chooses to utilize only the non-miraculous gifts to do His work through believers. 

Grieving The Holy Spirit

From the time a person is born again, the Holy Spirit is with him all the time. That means there is never a moment from the new birth to physical death that a believer is without the presence of the Spirit. Every waking moment, every sleeping moment, wherever he goes, whatever he does, the Christian is accompanied by the ever present Spirit of the Living God.

Sometimes, though, Christians have difficulty remembering that their bodies are the sanctified dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. And when they do forget, they tend to indulge the flesh and seriously offend Him. The Holy Spirit is a person, not an impersonal force, and offending Him is a very serious violation of one's relationship with God.

This is something about which each believer has a choice, though, because we are commanded in Ephesians 4:30 not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God. Since it is a command, it is up to each person to obey. It is imperative, therefore, that we understand what grieves the Spirit so we can avoid doing so. It is also helpful to know how we can resolve such grief if we have caused it.

I. What It Means To Grieve The Holy Spirit.

1. The Meaning of Grieve.

In very simple terms, "to grieve" means to make someone sad. So, when Scripture admonishes believers not to grieve the Spirit, it is telling us not to make Him sad. But the sadness suggested by the word "grieve" is a very intense sadness. As Christians we sin every day. Perfection comes only when this corruption puts on incorruption at the rapture/resurrection event. In the meantime, we are constantly missing our step on the path of righteousness. But we also have the privilege of confessing our sins on a regular basis and enjoying God's faithful forgiveness and cleansing (1 John 1:9). As long as we maintain a regular discipline of acknowledging our sins and confessing them before God, the Holy Spirit will not be grieved in our lives. He will never be happy with any of our trespasses, but He is mercifully patient with us when we demonstrate a willingness to be honest about our behavior. The words vex and despite help us understand what it really means to grieve the Holy Spirit.

a. Vexing the Holy Spirit. God's people vex the Holy Spirit by rebelling against him. Isaiah 63:10 says, "*But they rebelled, and vexed his holy spirit.*" The word "vexed" means to cause pain. Did you ever think about God experiencing emotional pain? When He looked down and saw His own people rebel against him, Scripture says His Holy Spirit felt pain.

b. Doing Despite to the Holy Spirit. They also do despite to the Holy Spirit by sinning willfully. Hebrews 10:26 and 29 say, "*For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,... Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?*" "Hath done despite" means to insult. Born again believers insult the Spirit of grace by willful sinful behavior. In the context of Ephesians 4:30, the Holy Spirit is grieved by such activities as lying (verse 25), unresolved anger (verse 26), stealing (verse 28), and

various forms of corrupt communication (verses 29,31). By this we understand that these are things we chose to do, and not things which are done inadvertently.

2. The Cause of Grief.

A believer does not necessarily grieve the Holy Spirit by every sin he commits. Instead, Hebrews 10:26 suggests that the cause of grief is sinning willfully. This involves a rebellious attitude that leads a person to defy God's commandments and purposely to choose a different path. It is this willful, rebellious attitude on the part of saved people that offends the Spirit and causes Him pain.

God is longsuffering with us as long as we are moving in the right direction. From the moment we are saved, the Holy Spirit works to sanctify us from all that is wrong in our lives and to enable us to do what is right. He works with us and in us to put off the old man and to put on the new. For many of us, this is a slow tedious process, not because the Spirit is unable to work more quickly, but because we are often slow in learning what He is trying to teach us. God is very understanding about this, no matter how slow our progress may be. However, when we are conscious of His presence and understand His desire to sanctify us, and we refuse to cooperate, willfully choosing to sin anyway, He takes it as a personal affront to Himself, and He is grieved and made intensely sad, feeling pain from being insulted.

II. What Does Not Grieve The Holy Spirit?

1. Ignorance.

Mere ignorance on our part is not painful and insulting to the Spirit. Ignorance is just characteristic of our imperfection as human beings, of our being less than all-wise and all-knowing. Ignorance caused by our human limitations does not grieve the Holy Spirit. In fact, Romans 8:26 speaks of the Holy Spirit interceding for our ignorance. When we know not what we ought to pray for the Holy Spirit intercedes for us.

2. Sinning Through Ignorance.

Neither is the Holy Spirit necessarily grieved when we sin through ignorance. Of course, God is not happy about any sin, but because He is longsuffering and because He understands our human limitations, he makes provision for the shortcomings of these limitations to be handled with greater mercy. In Leviticus chapters 4 and 5, several cases of sinning through ignorance are described. In each one, God provided for a sacrifice to be offered as compensation for the sin committed. In none of these cases was the death penalty or other severe consequences prescribed. God provided a means by which these ignorant sins could be dealt with so that the violators could continue to walk with Him.

Similarly, Luke 12:47-48 describes two persons, one of whom knows what he is supposed to do and sins anyway, while the other does not know what he is supposed to do but also sins. Verse 47 says, "*And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes.*" Both are guilty, because ignorance does not excuse sin. Both are punished for their sins because God is saddened to a degree by all of man's trespasses. But when a person sins ignorantly, God is less severe in His reaction.

3. Being Tricked By The Sin Nature.

In Romans 7:16-17, Paul tells of the personal struggle he had when he did not really want to violate righteousness but found himself doing so anyway. In these verses he says, *“If then I do that which I would not (or that which I do not want to do) “I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it but sin that dwelleth in me.”* In his heart, he really did not want to sin, but from time to time, he found himself sinning anyway. He understood, as does God, that it was not because of a rebellious attitude that he sinned, but because of the nature of sin that continued to contaminate his flesh. Succumbing unwittingly to the overt pressures of the sin nature does not necessarily grieve the Holy Spirit.

God does not want His children to live in constant fear that every little twist or turn of our lives might grieve His Spirit. Neither does He present an off-again on-again image of the Spirit in which He is turned off by every sin and turned on by every confession. Grieving the Spirit is a serious matter reserved for those willful rebellious actions by those who know better, or at least ought to. For our daily trespasses, God uses the sensation of guilt and perhaps some form of chastisement to turn us back to the path of righteousness. But for grievous sins there are more severe consequences which may or may not be reversible.

III. How Serious Is It To Grieve The Holy Spirit?

1. Quenching the Spirit.

Believers are admonished in I Thessalonians 5:19 with the simple statement, “quench not the Spirit.” The word quench means to smother a fire so that it loses its intensity. A willful determination to sin has this effect on the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer. His activity is quenched, slowed down, diminished, or perhaps stopped altogether. He does not leave, He simply is less active. As Psalm 78 explains, rebellious sin, and the symptom of unbelief that accompanies it, is the one thing that can limit God (note verse 41). Of course, it does not limit His power; it simply means that God will not do His work of empowering in a hostile environment.

King Saul serves as an example of this. In I Samuel 15:2-3, Samuel the prophet came to King Saul and conveyed to him an assignment from God. *“Thus saith the Lord of hosts...go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.”* Was there anything confusing about this assignment? No. Did Saul hear it clearly? Yes. Did Saul know what he was supposed to do? Absolutely. But what did he do? Saul led his army against the Amalekites, fought the battles, won the battles, and killed some of the soldiers, but he took Agag the King of the Amalekites captive, allowed many others to live, and brought their cattle back with him as spoils of the victory, all in defiance of God’s orders.

Saul initially attempted to blame the people for his failure to fulfill God’s orders, but verse 9 clearly says **Saul** and not just the people spared Agag. And **Saul** and not just the people spared *“the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them.”* **They would not!** It was an act of their will. They knew what they were supposed to do, but they rebelled. And Saul was the number one guilty party.

In confronting Saul, Samuel said, *“For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king.”* Saul was rebellious, that is, he knew

what he was supposed to do because God had clearly told him, but he willfully chose to do something else instead. He rebelled against the directives of God with an attitude of stubbornness and his willfulness grieved the Holy Spirit resulting in the Spirit of the Lord departing from him (I Samuel 16:14).

In the Old Testament, when the Holy Spirit was grieved, He simply departed from a person, leaving him to fend for himself in the trials and tribulations of life. Today it is not quite the same. The Spirit stays with the believer all the time, never leaving him, but the consequence for a rebellious attitude is no less traumatic. A present Holy Spirit that has been pained and insulted by our willful sin is just as serious a condition as an absent Holy Spirit. When His activity within is quenched it can be as devastating as though He were not there at all.

2. Sin Unto Death

In the New Testament era, the Holy Spirit is the administrator of physical consequences among believers. Sickness is sometimes the penalty imposed on an individual for specific sins (I Corinthians 11:30; James 5:14-15); and if the violation is serious enough, the Spirit may administer the penalty of physical death (I Corinthians 11:30; I John 5:17).

Hebrews 10:26-30 describes this very thing. Some interpret the verse to mean that a person can lose his salvation; but since one human being cannot put another human being to death spiritually, verse 28 must be referring to the physical death of guilty parties under the Law of Moses. In fact, capital punishment was the penalty issued for a variety of intentional crimes under Jewish law.

Murder, Exodus 21:12

Stealing people for slavery, Exodus 21:16

Cursing father or mother, Exodus 21:17

The owner of an animal that killed a person after the owner was warned his animal

was dangerous, Exodus 21:19

Bestiality, Exodus 22:19

Sabbath breakers, Exodus 31:14

Idolatry, Leviticus 20:2

Adultery, Leviticus 20:10

Fornication, Leviticus 20:11

Homosexuality, Leviticus 20:13

Occultic practices, Leviticus 20:27

Blaspheming the name of the Lord, Leviticus 24:16

Strangers getting too close to the tabernacle, Numbers 1:51

Rape, Deuteronomy 22:25

Capital punishment under the Mosaic law was administered by human beings, either by stoning (Leviticus 20:2, 27, etc., most common) or by hanging (Deuteronomy 21:22). But the Church has no civil jurisdiction, as Israel did, to enforce the spiritual and moral law of the Word of God through physical punishment. The most severe physical discipline available to the Church is within the context of fellowship, and is called either separation or shunning. So today, if physical death is to be imposed within the church (apart from the judicial activity of a civil government) as a penalty for violating God's moral and spiritual laws, it must be imposed by the Holy Spirit. In fact, Hebrews 10:29 suggests that being subject to judgment administered by the Holy Spirit is a "*much sorer punishment*" than that which might be executed by men.

God will not tolerate persistent willful sin in the church, as Hebrews 10:30 says, *“The Lord shall judge his people.”* Irresponsible behavior by those who ought to know better works against the Holy Spirit’s ability to build the household of God. He will either stop His activity within a believer and let him be vulnerable to the trouble of this world; or, if the infraction is serious enough, He will remove the errant Christian from this world altogether: in which case the errant Christian does go to Heaven, but prematurely. Ananias and Sapphira in Acts chapter 5 who lied to the Holy Spirit and those in I Corinthians 11:30 who ate and drank of the Lord’s table unworthily are examples of this.

III. How Do We Reverse the Grieving Of The Holy Spirit?

Serious sin does not have to result in the tragic consequences of quenching the Spirit or the sin unto death. An event in the life of David illustrates how a child of God can reverse the grief he has caused to the Holy Spirit before it goes that far and how he can be renewed to fellowship with God.

David was a man who knew what he should do and what he should not do for he was a man after God’s own heart. But one evening he was looking over the city from his balcony and crossed the line of willful sin. *“And it came to pass in an evening tide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king’s house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon. And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house”* (II Samuel 11:2-4).

David sinned with Bathsheba and his sin found him out when she became pregnant with his child. He then engineered a cover up to hide his sin, clearly indicating he knew what he had done was wrong. He called Bathsheba’s husband home from the battle field in hopes he would spend time with his wife and later assume her child was his own. But when Uriah refused to consort with his wife while his fellow soldiers labored in battle, David became desperate. *“And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die. And it came to pass, when Joab observed the city, that he assigned Uriah unto a place where he knew that valiant men were. And the men of the city went out, and fought with Joab: and there fell some of the people of the servants of David; and Uriah the Hittite died also”* (II Samuel 11:14-17).

He committed murder, compounding the problem of his adultery. Then he took Bathsheba for himself. *“And when the mourning was past, David sent and fetched her to his house, and she became his wife, and bare him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord”* (II Samuel 11:27). By these willful sins, David grieved the Holy Spirit which had dwelt within him ever since the day he was anointed to be king as a shepherd boy (I Samuel 16:13).

Nathan the prophet confronted him about his sin just as Samuel had confronted Saul. But Nathan introduced the subject indirectly, giving David the following story. *“There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: but the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveler unto the rich man, and he*

spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him" (II Samuel 12:1-4). David knew of his own guilt, of course, and he knew the agony within his own heart, but the human soul has a remarkable resilience which allows a man to live his daily life with the appearance of normalcy while suppressing the rage of failure within. David was functioning in his routine duties as king when Nathan approached him with this moving story. He responded to it in his role as judge lashing out with great harshness toward such a brutish act. *"David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, as the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die. And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity"* (verses 5-6).

There is irony when a child of God is filled with the bitterness of guilt but is the quickest to condemn others. Pointing fingers and critical spirits come from guilty hearts. The ones who carry the biggest furrow in their brow, the ones who carry the bitterest attitudes in their souls, the ones who are the most angry in the church are often the ones who are harboring the most grievous sins against the Holy Spirit. David was thus able to redirect his rage from himself to this fictitious violator of human decency, until - he realized that Nathan was talking about him. *"And Nathan said to David, thou art the man"* (verse 7).

Nathan then confronted David directly, issuing God's indictment on his life. In verse 9, he accused David of despising the commandment of God and doing evil in His sight. Again in verse 10 he accused David of despising God. In verses 10 and 11 he pronounced God's judicial sentence upon David's life: the sword would never depart from his house and God would raise up evil against him out of his own house.

David was crushed. The cover up was over, he was exposed, and his sin was about to become public knowledge (verse 12). He offered no excuses to Nathan but instead came clean with an admission of guilt. In verse 13, he said, *"I have sinned."*

There were some significant similarities between Saul's rebellion and David's despising of the Lord. Both knew what they had done was wrong. Both attempted to cover it up, Saul with excuses, David with murder. Neither admitted their wrong until they were confronted by a prophet. Both said exactly the same words, *"I have sinned,"* (Saul in I Samuel 15:30, David in II Samuel 12:13).

But there were also some significant differences. Saul's confession was insincere. He offered it only as a last ditch effort to save face. David's confession was genuine. He sincerely was remorseful for offending God and for making such a mess of things. Saul's insincerity resulted in the Holy Spirit leaving him after which Saul was cast into a debilitating depression. David prayed repentantly that God would not remove His Spirit from him (Psalm 51), fully accepted responsibility for what he had done and pleaded for the restoration of joy. In spite of Saul's plea for mercy, God rejected him and dealt with him severely; but God forgave David. *"And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die"* (II Samuel 12:13). David had grieved the Holy Spirit and faced the real possibility that he too would lose His indwelling presence. But when confronted with the truth, David was honest with himself, honest with the prophet Nathan and honest with God. As a result, God's reaction to David was much less severe than His reaction to Saul.

David's honesty in confession and genuineness in repentance relieved the tension his sin caused in his relationship with God. It is this kind of honesty before God that reverses the grieving of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer even today. God honors the contrite spirit (Psalm 34:18; Isaiah 66:2). And thus in the New Testament He

says, *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

It is important to note, however, that forgiveness in our spiritual relationship with God does not eliminate all of the consequences of our sins in our earthly human experience. Many think that because God forgives them, the reverberations of their sins in human society will disappear and they can live the rest of their lives as though there are no scars remaining from their past. This certainly was not the case with David. He was forgiven. There is no doubt about that (II Samuel 12:13). But even after forgiveness was applied to his life, after the grieving of the Holy Spirit was reversed, and after the joy of his salvation was restored (Psalm 51:13-19) the scars of his sin remained in his human experience. The sword never did depart from his house; his family was in turmoil until the end of his life on earth; and the baby, which was conceived in his adulterous affair, died. Grieving the Holy Spirit can be reversed and in eternity it will be relegated to the forgotten past, but in our present context it is a serious matter which bears real consequences, the effects of which one may have to live with as long as he remains on earth.

Conclusion

There is a lot of pseudo repentance in the Church of Jesus Christ these days. When a Christian is caught in grievous sin, he is often allowed to save face simply by mouthing the words, “I am so sorry that I have sinned.” But a person cannot walk with God simply by saying he does. *“If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth”* (I John 1:6). And, a person is not forgiven simply because he says he is sorry. King Saul certainly illustrated this.

David, on the other hand, was honest in his confession. He accepted responsibility for his sinful behavior, received forgiveness in his relationship with God and endured his human consequences with the graciousness of a man who knew he deserved much worse.

The key to preventing and/or reversing the grief we cause to the Holy Spirit is a genuine honesty about sin seasoned with a sincere attitude of repentance and remorse. Just as God knew the difference between Saul’s “I have sinned” and David’s “I have sinned,” so He can tell when a person is being honest and when he is not. If we come to God with an honest confession of all that we have become as sinners and submit to God for Him to do with us as He pleases, we can enjoy the wonderful fruits of fellowship with Him through the presence of His Holy Spirit, unquenched, ungrieved, actively leading, guiding, teaching, and helping us in a myriad of ways.

Is your Christian life dull and lifeless? Does it seem to lack the luster of a fresh relationship with God? Perhaps you have quenched the activity of the Spirit in your life because you have grieved him with your sinful behavior and your unwillingness to face its seriousness. Admit to Him that you have sinned. Acknowledge that you have been wrong. Demonstrate in the contriteness of your heart a genuine remorse because you have insulted the Holy Spirit and caused Him pain. He will forgive you and His renewed activity in your life will bring new vigor and vitality to your daily activities as you walk in the light as He is in the light. 📖

Walking In the Spirit

Walking is used by God in the Scriptures as an analogy for the Christian Life describing the activity of believers. The verses which refer to the Christian's "walk" define the path that is to be traveled. For example, believers are supposed to:

walk by faith	II Corinthians 5:7
walk in newness of life	Romans. 6:4
walk in good works	Ephesians 2:10
walk in love	Ephesians 5:2
walk in wisdom	Colossians 4:5
walk in truth	III John 4
walk honestly	Romans 13:13
walk circumspectly	Ephesians 5:15
walk worthy	Colossians 1:10

In addition, believers are also supposed to walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16, 25) or walk after the Spirit (Romans 8:1,4). Walking in or after the Spirit is not a mystical experience in which a person loses control of his body and/or his emotions. It is a practical submission to the leading of the Holy Spirit who guides us on the path of righteousness as defined in Scripture.

Psalms 23:3 offers the image of a shepherd walking on a path and all his sheep dutifully following. This is the idea intended by the phrase “walking in, or after, the Spirit.” God has laid out the path in His Word upon which His children are to travel here on earth. But knowing the tendency of the human heart to wander, He has provided His Holy Spirit (another comforter just like the Son - John 14:16, the good Shepherd - John 10:11, 14) to lead the way and to help us stay on the prescribed route. There are several things that the Holy Spirit does in order to keep us on that path of righteousness.

I. The Holy Spirit Illumines Believers

In order for Christians to walk on the path of righteousness, we must be able to see the path clearly. While the Word itself is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path, it is the Holy Spirit that turns the light on, making it possible for us believers to understand what Scripture says.

God has prepared for us all the things we need to know in order to walk (live) soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, and He has communicated them to us in the Bible; but unless He explains to us what His words mean, it will be impossible for us to find our way. This is why the Holy Spirit is so necessary. The Holy Spirit illumines us believers, or turns the light bulb on in our heads, so we can see, or understand, what Scripture means.

There was an incident in my high school English literature class that illustrates this point. We were assigned to read some poems by famous authors and then we discussed them in class. Some of the poems were quite strange, but our teacher was able to extract from each one some philosophical picture. At one point, I raised my hand and asked the teacher how she arrived at her explanations. I concluded my question with this, “Wouldn’t it be necessary to talk directly with the author to find out what he really meant by these hard to understand phrases?” The teacher responded by saying she thought the author expected each reader of his poems to make his own interpretation, allowing for a variety of meanings to be derived from the same words and phrases.

This same arbitrary approach is used by modern cults and alternative forms of Christianity to interpret Scripture. They have no idea what God intended by his words so they make up something from their own imagination. But such humanly devised interpretations and applications of God’s words invariably lead to false conclusions and unbiblical practices. Even in mainline Christianity, man’s wisdom often distorts the path God intended for His children to follow by defining and explaining the words of the Bible completely apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. If believers are to stay on the path called righteousness we must put man’s wisdom aside and follow only the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

It is only by the illumination of the Holy Spirit that anyone can properly appreciate the intended meaning of the things God has communicated through His written Word (1 Corinthians 2:10,12,13,16). When two Christians come to two different understandings about what God has said, it is certain that at least one of them is not listening to the Spirit of God. It will never be that the Holy Spirit will help two different people come to

two different conclusions about what God has said.

Near where we live is a park with several trails through the woods. When going there for a hike, one must choose which path he will take. Once a path is chosen and the hike has begun, one discovers that the path splits and new choices are required in order to stay on the same path upon which he started. Reading the markers along the trail is crucial to staying on the right path and reaching the desired destination. In life, we can choose to walk on God's prescribed path of righteousness or any one of a number of alternatives. The entrance to God's path is by grace through faith in Christ alone. Once that path is chosen, there will be many opportunities to wander off onto tangents that distract us from the things which God has prepared for us. The word of God marks the path of righteousness; the Holy Spirit gives us discernment to read the markers correctly, assisting us to reach the destinations of faithfulness and maturity in Christ.

II. The Holy Spirit Convicts Believers

Unfortunately, there are times that every believer fails to heed the direction of the Holy Spirit and wanders off on some alternative to the path of righteousness. We may do this intentionally and with a rebellious attitude creating a serious situation in our relationship with God (see previous chapter); but often, we are simply duped by one of three evil influences - the world, the flesh and the devil - and are convinced by them to wander.

It is in these cases of our wanderings that the Holy Spirit seeks to turn us back to the right path through his ministries of reproof and chastisement. Even though God's forgiveness is applied to our lives at the time of our salvation, He is not willing to tolerate sinful acts in our daily lives. So, whether our sin is intentional or unintentional, He will faithfully convict us of our wrongs and redirect our steps to righteousness.

Jesus told His disciples that one of the things the Holy Spirit would come to do is reprove the world of sin (John 16:8). The Spirit does this in the lives of unbelievers to convince them of their need of salvation through Jesus Christ. He also does this in the lives of believers to restore them to faithfulness as they walk in Jesus Christ.

The word "reprove" in both the Old and New Testaments means to make a judgement about some one with the intention of showing them they are guilty (Psalm 50:21; Ephesians 5:13). In the Old Testament context, reproof is accompanied by setting a person's sins before his eyes (Psalm 50:21). Similarly, David said in Psalm 51:3, "my sin is ever before me." In the New Testament context, reproof is accomplished by light which manifests, or shows, a thing to be what it really is (Ephesians 5:13). Obviously, the Holy Spirit is light (because He is God and God is light) and so under His scrutiny, our sin is clearly set before our eyes bringing our attention to what we have done.

It is as though the path of righteousness is lined on either side with mirrors. As soon as we turn to one side or the other, we see ourselves and cannot escape the fact that we are wandering off the path. The Holy Spirit makes us look at what we are doing until we are willing to say, "I am sorry, I was wrong, I confess, will you forgive me?" and we turn back to the right way.

It is important to note that the Holy Spirit only does this for unconfessed sins. Many of us may experience the haunting memories of sins from our past, things which we have confessed to God long ago and for which we have been assured of forgiveness. When God forgives our sins, He promises to remember them no more

(Hebrews 8:12, 10:17), putting them as far away as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12) and burying them in the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19). Memories of confessed and forgiven sins do not come from the Holy Spirit, they come from the accuser of the brethren, the devil (Revelation 12:10; I Peter 5:8). It is not the ministry of the Holy Spirit to harass us about something for which we have been forgiven.

The Holy Spirit may also chastise a believer for his sin by bringing some trial or tribulation into his life. Hebrews 12 says, *“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth....Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby”* (verses 6,9-11). Physical illness which results directly from sinful activity is one example of chastisement (I Corinthians 11:30; James 5:15).

It is as though the path of righteousness is lined on either side with an electric fence. An electric fence is used to contain cattle. It shocks them when they attempt to go out of bounds. Similarly, when a Christian begins to go off the path of righteousness, the Holy Spirit is there with His rod to make us aware of our fault. The shock we experience from the Holy Spirit’s chastisement is the sensation of guilt. Guilt in the Christian life is not designed to destroy us. Instead, guilt is a blessing because it is the signal that we have gone too far. If we learn to respond immediately to the sensation of guilt, acknowledging our sin, confessing it to God and receiving His forgiveness, we can be spared the more severe consequences that come from grieving the Holy Spirit through persistence in sinning.

We should be thankful that the Holy Spirit brings our sin to our attention when we wander off the path. We should be grateful that He sets our sin before our eyes and shocks us with the sensation of guilt. We should rejoice that He works tirelessly to convict us of our sins in order to keep us walking on the path of righteousness.

III. The Holy Spirit Intercedes For Believers

One thing that keeps us focused on the path of righteousness is a consistent prayer life. Regular audiences with God help us stay away from those things that displease Him because it is more than a little embarrassing to dally in sin and address the Holy Father at the same time.

But sometimes when we pray, especially when we are in trouble, *“we know not what we should pray for as we ought.”* (Romans 8:26). Albert Barnes suggests why this may be.

“The reasons why Christians do not know what to pray for may be, (1) That they do not know what would be really best for them. (2) They do not know what God might be willing to grant them. (3) They are to a great extent ignorant of the character of God, the reason of his dealings, the principles of his government, and their own real wants. (4) They are often in real deep perplexity. They are encompassed with trials, exposed to temptations, feeble by disease, and subject to calamities. In these circumstances, if left alone, they would neither be able to bear their trials, nor know what to ask at the hand of God.”

Our ignorance in these matters may cause us not to pray at all. This is the worst thing that can happen. Staying away from personal encounters with God only makes it easier for us to wander away from Him. It is very unfortunate that at the very times we really need to pray, we tend not to.

It is better to pray some inarticulate groanings than not to pray at all. God has given us this wonderful promise that in such times of inadequacy, the Holy Spirit intercedes for us and translates our mutterings into coherent requests. As the whole verse reads in Romans 8:26, "*Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*" Not knowing what we should pray for as we ought is not a sinful thing, it is just a symptom of our human limitations. One of the ministries of the Holy Spirit is to compensate for our limitations by interceding for us.

The key to success in this part of our lives is praying in faith (James 1:5-6). Even if we do not know what to say, we can still have the desire to do God's will (I John 5:14) and we can trust that He will accept the sincerity of our hearts in place of the eloquence of our words which we have lost. If we have prayed with an unwavering faith and a sincere desire to do God's will, even though we have no idea what that may be, God will direct our thoughts to His will and order our steps in spite of our ignorance.

David said in Psalm 142:3, "*When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path.*" Like those maps at the mall that say "YOU ARE HERE!" God is always aware of where we are and where we ought to be. What wonderful comfort there is for us in knowing that when we are overwhelmed by the circumstances of life, the Holy Spirit knows exactly where we are and will help us in our cry for help.

IV. The Holy Spirit Empowers Believers

Walking righteously on a consistent basis can be a very taxing task. The energy can drain from us quickly as we struggle to stay on the right path and try to avoid the temptations which influence us to wander. We might even begin to wonder if we will be able to handle some of the really difficult things that come into our lives.

The fact is we cannot handle these things on our own. The power we need to deal with the trials and temptations of life is not something we can find within ourselves. The wisdom of man erroneously encourages us to look deep within and find the resources that are there to pull ourselves up by the bootstraps and be anything we want to be and do anything we want to do. But such resources just do not exist in the human being.

They do exist in God, though, and the indwelling Holy Spirit makes them available to every believer who will acknowledge Him and submit to His working in and through us. This is why Paul prayed for the Ephesians "*to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man* (Ephesians 3:16); and it is why he told the Philippians, "*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me* (Philippians 4:13). God never gives us more than we can handle without giving us a means of handling it (I Corinthians 10:13). And expressed in another way, "*We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us* (II Corinthians 4:7).

God does not want his children to portray an image of macho men and women who live as super heroes in this world. Instead, He wants us to recognize our dependance upon the Holy Spirit who will do His work through us as we submit to Him. As we decrease in our own eyes, He increases and empowers us for His purposes.

Annie Johnson Flynt wrote a song that describes how God supplies what we need when we need it. Its title is "He Giveth More Grace."

He giveth more grace when the burden grows greater;
He sendeth more strength when the labors increase.
To added affliction He addeth His mercy;
To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace.

When we have exhausted our store of endurance,
When our strength has failed ere the day is half done,
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources,
Our Father's full giving is only begun.

His love has no limit; His grace has no measure;
His power has no boundary known unto men.
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus,
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again!

When you face a situation which you know you cannot handle on your own -- the best thing to do is relax. Wait on the Lord; rely upon the Holy Spirit; let Him hold you up. He will cover you with His mercy. He will strengthen you with might in your inner man.

Adrenalin might serve as an illustration of the way the Holy Spirit takes over in our lives when we need His power. Adrenalin is a chemical inside the human body. It is a white to brownish crystalline compound (C-9, H-13, NO-3) that when secreted from the adrenal gland heightens emotion and increases physical strength. There are stories told of people who in times of crisis or necessity have had adrenalin produced in such quantities that they were able to perform amazing feats. One such situation occurred when a wife discovered a car fallen off a jack onto her husband who had been working underneath the car. She was able to lift the car allowing her husband to roll free. Under normal circumstances there was no way she could lift the car, but because of the heavy injection of adrenalin into her system, she was able to save her husband's life.

The Holy Spirit is our spiritual adrenalin gland. When you need it, He provides the power sufficient to deal with the trouble being experienced. We need not worry that something might happen which is beyond our ability to handle. The Holy Spirit is always with us, and as we rely upon Him, He will provide the strength we need for every tough thing that comes our way.

Conclusion

About a year after I purchased a 1985 Celebrity, I wanted to put a different radio in the car. It had only an AM radio and I wanted to install an FM radio with cassette player. Some years before this I successfully changed a radio in a 1970 Maverick, so I thought this would be just as easy. I started removing the old radio and encountered more wires than I had ever seen on one gadget in my life. It was a complicated mess. But I thought, "How hard can this be?" So I started pulling wires off here and there trying to remember which wire came off of what. Then I discovered that the configuration on the new radio did not line up with the wires which came off of the old radio. At this point I had to turn to an authority for help because it was beyond my ability to sort out.

We can try to live life on our own. We can try to make the right choices and do those things which are pleasing to God. But there will be times when we face things that

go beyond our capacity to deal with on our own.

It is humbling to discover how feeble we are as we walk in this world, but it is a good thing to discover; for it is in our feebleness that we find the enablement of God through His Spirit. As God said to Paul, “*My strength is made perfect in (your) weakness*” (II Corinthians 12:9). God’s strength will be most useful to us when we realize how weak we are and when we understand that the excellency of the power we need is not of us, but of God. The Holy Spirit serves as the mind of Christ inside of us, telling us all about the path God has prepared for us, pricking our hearts with guilt when we start to wander, interceding for our ignorance when we do not know which way to go, and giving us the strength to face the difficulties we encounter along the way.

Are you struggling as you try to walk the straight and narrow path? Relax. Wait on the Lord, rely upon the Holy Spirit, let Him hold you up. He will cover you with His mercy. He will strengthen you with might in your inner man. He will provide all you need to walk on the path of righteousness and glorify God in your life.

In John 14:1, Jesus said to his disciples, “*Let not your heart be troubled.*” Note that He did not say, “*Let not your life be troubled.*” Walking in this world is not easy. We will encounter trouble all along the way. But the Holy Spirit’s presence in our lives makes it possible for us to endure the circumstances of trouble without the peace of our hearts being disturbed. As Ephesians 5:8 says, “*For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light; for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth.*” We can walk with confidence as the people who walk in the light because the Holy Spirit is inside of us producing the fruit of goodness and righteousness and truth.📖

