



The gift of the Spirit to believers

Jew and Gentile are united into one household we are told in Ephesians 2:18-19, because each and every child of God shares one Spirit in his heart. All Christians are build together. Individual saints are building blocks of one holy temple (verses 21 and 22). This temple is not merely consecrated to God; but the Most High himself takes up residence in the temple. The third Person of the glorious Trinity inhabits the universal church. Our fellowship with the Father and the Son is through the resident Spirit in our hearts. In the same way that the whole body of Christ is a temple, each individual believer is a temple of the living God (1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19). This is according to the Lord's promise,

'I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.'

(2 Corinthians 6:16)

The Father who chose a people for himself, and the Son who came to save them have sent this inconceivably wondrous gift to all saints — the Holy Spirit to live within them. He is the first instalment of our inheritance. He is the foretaste of everlasting bliss. Though we cannot altogether forget what the Spirit does within believers, emphasis must not fall upon His ministries to us but upon His divine personhood within.

The Holy Spirit is the great gift of the Father, for which Christ encouraged the apostles to await. The promise of the gift was repeated again and again in John 14-16 and Acts 1. The Spirit is the gift and grand promise which has now come to the church. One thing which must be emphasized from Ephesians 2 and from Acts 1 and 2 is that the gift of the Holy Spirit has been given to *all* the children of God. The apostles had to await the Pentecostal measure of the Spirit. Yet on the day they received the new measure of the Spirit, they preached that all who repented and were baptized would receive the same gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38); for the promise of the Spirit was to *'as many as the Lord our God shall call'* (Acts 2:39).

There is no teaching in the New Testament of a two-tiered experience, the first to receive salvation and a second to receive the Holy Spirit. Rather, there is no true convert to Christ in whom the Spirit does not reside.

'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.'

(Romans 8:9)

Anyone who has not the Spirit of God dwelling in him and leading him is no child of God (Romans 8:14). This crown jewel, with all its splendour and dignity, has been embedded within the soul of the least in the kingdom of God. Jehovah himself is present within believers. God the Holy Spirit is a permanent inhabitant of the heart. What higher gift can be imagined!

It must be noted, however, that the presence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, and the operations of the Spirit upon us and through us are not static and unvarying. At least three New Testament texts should settle our conviction that the Spirit of God comes to us in differing measures or degrees. He is like a tide with low and flood seasons. He is like a fire which burns at times more intensely. There is increase and decrease, change and modulation.

1. Ephesians 4:30 warns us: *'Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God'*. Being God, the Holy Spirit is a person. He may be grieved away from us by the attitudes of our hearts. Coldness, indifference, bitterness and envy may put him at a distance from us — not a distance in space but in personal relationship. Sinful words and actions not repented of may have the same effect. The

Spirit may also be wooed, and his nearness nurtured. When he is treated as a welcome guest, with dignity and love, close communion and sympathy of personalities are fostered.

2. Ephesians 5:18 advises us to *'be filled with the Spirit'*. It is an exhortation for us to do what is necessary to having a full, controlling measure of the Holy Spirit. This certainly suggests that there are degrees of filling. Repeated fillings is an idea supported by the book of Acts. We have reason to believe that Peter was filled with the Spirit on the day of Pentecost (2:4); as he spoke to hostile Jewish rulers (4:8); and as the Christians prayed for boldness (4:31). Even if we were to chart on a graph the level of the Spirit's presence and influence upon an apostle, we would not have a straight line.
3. 1 Thessalonians 5:19 is another text which sounds the warning: *'Quench not the Spirit'*. The Spirit, his influences, grace and power may be stifled or fed. Certainly the language suggests the imagery of fire.

If there are differing measures of the Spirit's presence and influence within Christians, we ought to long for more of the Holy Spirit. It is proper to desire and to seek a higher degree of His fellowship and working. Our Lord Jesus taught us to pray for the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13). A hunger to have the Spirit advance to new heights within us is appropriate. But in a day of many errors and excesses that are promoted falsely in the name of the Holy Spirit, our desires must be guided and controlled by the Word of God. Caution and carefulness are needed. It is important to seek the Spirit with a well-instructed mind, defining just what it is for which we are searching. Zeal without knowledge is dangerous and of times tragic. Because we believe in the supernatural, we are not called upon to be gullible and accept as supernatural everything labelled with the name.

1. *We reject an identification of our desires for more of the Spirit with miracle-working and revelations.* In ages past the Holy Spirit did 'carry along' prophets to produce objective deposits of truth. As the Spirit gave these revelations, He worked wonders in the physical realm in connection with them, bearing witness to the divine authority of the messages given. As the apostolic era ended, so did revelations and the wonders that attended them. But the Spirit had a marvellous work to continue to perform upon the souls of men.

One tragedy of the modern Charismatic Movement is the confusion it has given rise to between objective and subjective, material and spiritual. It has made so much noise about revelations and miracles that the vastly important spiritual ministries of the Holy Spirit have been quite forgotten by many. As we seek more of the Holy Spirit, we are not seeking any further revelation of truth. The Scriptures are sufficient. We are fully satisfied with the means of grace which the Spirit gave in Christ and by his apostles. Nothing more could be desired. But that is *not* to say that we are content with the grace that has come to us by those means! We do thirst for more grace; not wonder-working in the physical realm, but more of the mighty non-material third Person of the Godhead in our hearts.

When the Spirit comes in greater measure, he does so by the means he himself has set in place. He will honour the Word which he inspired men to write. He will not by-pass Christ's Words, *'for they are spirit and life'* (John 6:63). When the Spirit comes, his increased presence will evidence itself externally in the confessions and actions of those he fills. As we use the divinely-given means of grace, the Word of God, the sacraments and prayer, we pray for the Spirit to ride upon them in glory. What good are the chariots if the Lord Himself is not in them? O for more of the Spirit attending the means, touching and transforming souls by His divine touch!

2. *We further reject an identification of our desire for more of the Spirit with a once-for-all crisis experience.* Our search is not to be thought of as a 'second work of grace' which will for ever place us on a higher plane of blessing. There is no list of pre-conditions to fulfil, after which we may rest and the search will be ended. There is no encounter that will fully satisfy and put an end to longing for more of the Spirit. Until we are completely like our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall desire more of the Spirit. Until we are in a world where all have been won to Christ, we shall be seeking more of the Spirit. Until we gaze on the face of the Son of God and worship in His immediate presence, there will be more of the Spirit to be sought.

Men who have lived through the greatest times of Spiritual Awakening have longed for more of the Spirit. One need only read Edwards' *History of Redemption* to realize that he considered the Great Awakening but a slight beginning. If tomorrow we were to surpass the deepest spiritual experiences of revivals past, there would be more of the Spirit to seek. Ours is a daily pressing on for filling, for higher tides, for brighter burnings of the Spirit within. We are not seeking a 'more' that will end our seeking! We must be like the horse-leach and the grave when it comes to seeking more of the Spirit. We must never say 'enough', but always must we cry, 'More, More!'

3. *We reject an identification of our desire for more of the Spirit with something new as to kind.* We are seeking only what all the saints in all ages since Christ have experienced. We are seeking to have the same intensified. We love to identify with the church of Christ throughout the ages. To criticize all who have gone before is rash and sinful. To imagine that something altogether new has begun with us is to suffer from hallucinations, through pride. Our receiving more of the Spirit will not place us above others in Christendom. We are not endeavouring to become an elite. In seeking for more of the Spirit, we are looking only for what genuine Christians have already experienced. We are seeking higher degrees or increased measures of the same.

It may not be clear, however, to some minds what this Holy Spirit would do for us if we had more of him. Thus it is important to specify the leading influences and operations of the Spirit upon our hearts when He comes in great measure. The following are the ministries of the Spirit's presence for which we seek an added supply of the Spirit:

1. We must not grieve the Spirit of Truth

He is so called by our Lord Jesus Christ in John 16:13. We already have from the Spirit of Truth all the objectified representations of truth we expect to examine with our senses in this world. A completed Word is in our hands. But the Spirit is also a personal teacher to every Christian as he studies the Word. *'The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth...'* (1 John 2:27). Only as the Spirit of God subjectively comes to our hearts along with the words He has objectively given do we understand them. *'They are spiritually discerned'* (1 Corinthians 2:14).

All students may have the same teacher. But some may seek out the instructor with persistence and receive added tutoring. We love the doctrines of Scripture already; the glorious truths have been made plain to our hearts by the Spirit. *'More to be desired are they than gold ... sweeter also than the honeycomb'*. An inward apprehension of truth now fills our minds, stirs our emotions, moves our wills and directs our consciences. But O for a season when impressions of truth will be more keen, when conviction of the certainty of each doctrine will be heightened! O that our grasp of truth came more quickly and more profoundly! Only by the Spirit can there be whole-hearted embrace of the truth.

2. We must not quench the Spirit of worship

Our fellowship with the Father and the Son is by the Spirit who dwells in our hearts. One of his leading offices is expressed in Jesus' words, *'He shall glorify me'* (John 16:14). It is the function of the Holy Spirit to open our spiritual eyes to the awesome glory of the Father and the Son. This invariably produces a response of worship.

When the inward man, by the Spirit, apprehends the majesty of the Most High, it is like Job crying, *'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee'* (Job 42:5). It is God the Spirit who by the Scripture ushers us into the presence of the Almighty. This conscious approach and an inward gazing upon Him is so much at the heart of Biblical worship. Zechariah 12:10 predicts the pouring out of the Spirit in these terms, *'They shall look upon me...'* The apostles said, *'We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father...'* Every true Christian has seen something of the glory. But the strange experience of worship always makes us yearn for

more. The more of His glory we drink in, the thirstier we become. We cry with Moses, *'I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.'*

Very much related to this matter of worship is a true response of prayer from our hearts. We cannot pray without the Spirit. He is *'the Spirit of grace and of supplications'* (Zechariah 12:10). It is He who prompts all Christians to cry *'Abba, Father'* (Romans 8:15). You who are filled with the Spirit evidence it (Ephesians 5:19, 20) by *'singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks to the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus!'*

There are times when the very same means of grace leaves us dull and others when we are vibrant and solemn in worship. The difference is in the measure of the Spirit's working in us. We long for more of the Spirit, that our worship may be more frequent, more sweet, with more unction.

3. We must be filled with the Spirit of Sanctification

Pre-eminently he is the Holy Spirit. Already we have grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, yet we are commanded to *'grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ'* (2 Peter 3:18). Any progress we make in ridding ourselves of the influences of the law of sin will be made by the Spirit. All mortifying of the flesh must be through the Spirit (Romans 8:12-14). As we cast off the works of darkness, we also must put on the deeds of light. All these are the fruit of the Spirit. A craving to cast off sin and put on righteousness is one and the same with a desire for the Holy Spirit.

When the Spirit does come in greater measure, he produces a deep interest in righteousness. He focuses attention not on healthy bodies and material prosperity and outward peace, but upon holiness of life. For this reason the Spirit's work begins with conviction, not with immediate transports of joy, while ignoring issues of Biblical morality.

'When he is come, he will convince the world of sin' (John 16:8). When God poured out his Spirit of grace and supplications, *'they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him...'* (Zechariah 12:10). When Job saw the Lord with the eyes of his soul, he said, *'Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes'* (Job 42:6). Isaiah cried, *'Woe is me! for I am undone'* (Isaiah 6:5). Ezekiel's great prophecy of the New Testament measure of the Spirit ends with the prediction, *'Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities...'* (Ezekiel 36:31). This penitent concern for righteousness was seen on the day of Pentecost when numerous men interrupted Peter's sermon with, *'Men and brethren, what shall we do?'*

We seek for a deepening interest in righteousness by the Spirit. For we long for more grief and hatred of sin. Our desires are kindled for increased, hastened progress in sanctification.

4. He is the Spirit of Power for whom we pray

As we obey the Scriptures in serving the Lord, our effectiveness and fruitfulness is directly proportionate to the measure in which the Spirit attends our labours. In the work of evangelism, we have no hope of any usefulness, except as the Spirit of conviction and of regeneration touches the hearts of those for whom we pray and labour. As we teach and exhort, unless the Spirit acts upon the hearts of our Christian hearers, there will be none of the looked-for responses.

We recall our Lord's promises: *'Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you'* (Acts 1:8). And, *'Greater works than these shall he do'* (John 14:12). No one than Christ has ever done greater works in the sense of miracles in the physical world. If the references is to wonder-working, the promise would lie unfulfilled. But by the Spirit, others have surpassed the works of our Saviour, in impressing hearts with the truth and bringing multitudes to repentance.

These are the works the Spirit has done to some degree in all saints through all ages. These are operations of the Spirit we have experienced to some degree. But for more of the same we seek by

prayer. More of the Spirit of illumination, more of the Spirit of worship, more of the Spirit of righteousness, more of the Spirit of power.

Any one man may conceivably receive more of the Spirit in the sense in which we have used the term. It is possible that he may have more of the Spirit only to be hidden in a lonely spot on the earth, walking near to his God. The Spirit's influence may not spread to others if he is kept in isolation or martyred for his Lord. But when at the same time, (1) the Spirit works more widely upon a church, locality or nation, and (2) the Spirit works more quickly than is usual, and (3) the Spirit works more deeply than we are accustomed to observing — then there is what we know as revival. The Spirit is doing just what he has always done in all the saints through all ages, only more widely, more quickly, more deeply. Scripture uses vivid language to excite our imaginations and expectations for such movings of the Spirit (cf. Amos 9:13; Isaiah 60:22; Isaiah 66:7-9).

In a day when there is much error, excess and even fanaticism regarding the Holy Spirit, it is most difficult to stay on course in seeking the Spirit. It would be easier to accept almost anything else than what the Scripture warrants us to long after. It would be easier to fall in with those who say all Christians already have all of the Spirit that they need, and give up the search. It would be easier to rest content with study, activity, or excitement, rather than to pray earnestly for the Spirit. It would be easier to divert our attention to external dramatics and 'miracles' in the physical realm than to insist on the Spirit of grace and supplications touching men's souls.

But if it is more of the Spirit you want, more of his illumination, his promptings of reverent worship, his sanctifying grace, his mighty power transforming souls, then you must exclude other things in order to pray and preach the Word. We are shut up to prayer and preaching. These are the only means by which the Spirit comes. Surely the Lord will not leave those destitute of the Spirit who faithfully use his appointed means. But were he to do so, there would be nowhere else to turn. If prayer and preaching do not bring the Spirit, surely disorder, informality, confusion, noise, pretended marvels, dramatics, entertainment and emotionalism will not do so.

Those who preach the Word and pray fervently should ever have the Spirit in mind. He must not be grieved or quenched. We must be filled with him more and more. In this way we show our sincere appreciation for the remarkable gift of the Father and the Son to us — the Holy Spirit.

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