

The Holy Spirit

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Preface

This book was written by Pastor Jonathan to accompany the talks he gave on the ministry of the Holy Spirit for the *Serving Today* radio programme. In it he seeks to give us a good introduction to the Holy Spirit's person and work. Pastor Jonathan has had many years of pastoral and Bible teaching experience, and we are grateful to him for making this valuable contribution.

As you read this book you will realise that Pastor Jonathan looks at this vital Biblical subject in a very refreshing way, and he shares with us the insight the Lord has given him into the work of the third person of the Trinity. You will inevitably find your own heart challenged as you read this short book, and we trust that in turn will stimulate you to a deeper study of the work of the Holy Spirit in the Bible. You will gain the

most benefit from this book if you read it with your Bible by your side so that you can look up the many Bible references it contains. In addition, seek to read it prayerfully asking the Lord himself to teach you from what he has revealed in Scripture about the Holy Spirit.

The wonderful truth is that every Christian believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God, and his ministry in the believer's life is to strengthen, enlighten, teach and sanctify each one who trusts in Christ for salvation. It through God's Spirit that the believer is made alive in Christ, and it is through his gracious work that we are prepared for heaven as he applies the teaching of the Word of God to our lives.

I am very grateful to Pastor Jonathan for his willingness to guide us into some of the Bible's teaching about the Spirit of God's ministry.

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Chapter 1: The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

We hear of God's Spirit for the first time as early as the second verse of the Bible. Genesis 1:2 says that

‘the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters’

This paints a beautiful picture. Deuteronomy 32:11 speaks of a parent eagle hovering over its young as it teaches them to fly. The parent is ready to catch the young bird if it falls. The picture of the Spirit hovering over creation is a dramatic way of saying that there is no way that God’s newly created universe could fall to pieces. The Holy Spirit nurtured and protected it from the very beginning.

And the Holy Spirit continues to be involved with God’s created world. In Isaiah 34:16 we read that animals find their mates because of the involvement of the Spirit. Psalm 104:24-30 credits the Spirit for the fact that animals reproduce. According to Isaiah 63:14, it is the Spirit of the Lord who directs the movements and stopping places of the animals.

But it is especially with human beings that the Holy Spirit works. Genesis 6:3 teaches that he strives with sinful people. He is like the prosecutor in a court case. He convicts us of our sin, and so aims to bring us to repentance. And God’s Spirit is everywhere. This is what Psalm 139:7 says:

“Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?”

Some people might like to escape from God’s Spirit, but there is nowhere they can go. However, if our heart’s desire is to be in the realm of the Spirit, we have the comfort of knowing that we shall never find ourselves outside this delightful presence.

Psalm 139:8-12 put this beautifully:

“If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, ‘Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,’ even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.”

The Holy Spirit is present on the heights and in the depths. He is there at the world’s farthest breadths. He is with us in the dark as well as in the daylight. We live in the reality of the divine presence constantly, because of the omnipresent Spirit.

In the Old Testament it is particularly with the people of Israel that the Holy Spirit is concerned. Isaiah 63:11 looks back to the time of Moses when God

“...set his Holy Spirit among them.”

Then in Haggai 2:5 the Lord reminds his people:

“...my Spirit remains among you.”

It is just because God’s Spirit has always been in the midst of Israel that he is the real target of their rebellion. Just before speaking of the presence of the Spirit in their midst since the time of Moses, Isaiah 63:10 says:

“Yet they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit.”

The sin of God’s people brings real sorrow to the Holy Spirit.

God continued to speak to his people through his prophets, and their words were the words of the Holy Spirit. This fact is stated several times. Here are a couple of examples. In 2 Samuel 23:2 David says:

“The Spirit of the Lord spoke through me.”

As Nehemiah leads the people in prayer, he says to the LORD in Nehemiah 9:30:

“By your Spirit you admonished them through your prophets.”

The Old Testament often speaks of the Holy Spirit coming upon someone at a particular time for a

specific purpose. Many times the Spirit would come upon a person and enable him to speak God’s Word. We read this about Balaam in Numbers 24:2-3:

“...the Spirit of God came upon him, and he uttered this oracle...”

But the Spirit came upon people for other purposes too. Again, here are just a few examples. Judges 6:34 tells us that the Spirit came upon Gideon. The result was his remarkable victory over the Midianites with his tiny army. Several times the Spirit came upon Samson. For example, the Spirit made it possible for Samson to overcome the lion in Judges 13:25, and to break the ropes in chapter 15:14. In 1 Kings 11:6 the Spirit comes upon Saul, and he is roused to summon the troops for battle.

Because the possession of the Spirit was only a temporary experience in the Old Testament, it was sadly possible for the Spirit to depart from a person. This tragedy happened to Saul. We read about it in 1 Samuel 16:14. In Psalm 51:11 David prays to God:

“Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.”

Probably the memory of what had happened to Saul made this request all the more urgent.

However, there are exceptions to this pattern of a temporary endowment of the Spirit. Joshua is described in Numbers 27:18 as:

“...a man in whom is the Spirit...”

Then 1 Samuel 16:13 tells us that God’s Spirit came upon David when he was anointed to be king:

“...from that day on...”

Perhaps Bezaleel comes into this category too. The LORD says of him in Exodus 31:3:

“...I have filled him with the Spirit of God...”

This gave Bezaleel the practical wisdom and craftsmanship he needed to construct the tabernacle. Perhaps he is a specific example of the universal truth that all human abilities are always resourced from the Spirit of God. This is an aspect of the reality of what we sometimes call ‘common grace’ – the general goodness and kindness of God to all people, so that anything praiseworthy in human life finds its origin in his Spirit.

Chapter 2: From the Old Testament to the New

The Holy Spirit is often linked in the Old Testament with the new covenant promise. The prophets were looking forward to an outpouring of the Spirit in a new way. Here are a few texts to illustrate this. In Isaiah 44:3 the Lord says:

“I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring...”

The Lord makes this promise in Ezekiel 39:29:

“I will no longer hide my face any more from them, for I will pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel...”

In Joel 2:28-29 we have this promise:

“I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.”

The Old Testament highlights two particular features of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which it is looking forward to. His presence will be permanent, and he will reside within God’s people.

So in Isaiah 59:21 the Lord emphasizes the permanent presence of the Spirit:

“As for me, this is my covenant with them,’ says the LORD. ‘My Spirit, who is on you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth, or from the mouths of your children, or from the mouths of their descendants from this time on and for ever,’ says the LORD.”

This contrasts with the temporary nature of the Spirit’s coming upon people before this.

And Ezekiel 36:27 especially emphasizes the indwelling of the Spirit where we read:

“I will put my Spirit in you...”

These words are repeated in verse 14 of the next chapter. Again, the hope of the Spirit within shows that Old Testament believers were looking forward to something more special than the Spirit coming upon a person.

This new covenant promise is closely connected with the coming of the Messiah. Isaiah especially brings out the truth that the coming Messiah will be endowed with the Spirit in a unique way. In Isaiah 11:2 it says:

“The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord...”

In Isaiah 42:1 the LORD says:

“Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations.”

In Isaiah 61:1 the servant himself speaks prophetically:

“The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners...”

And so we move into the New Testament and see the fulfilment of these prophetic predictions. Jesus was born to a virgin, and the Holy Spirit played a key role in this miracle. When the angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she was to be the mother of the Son of God, the endless king, Mary could not understand how this could possibly happen. The angel explained in Luke 1:35:

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you.”

The angel also explained this to Joseph in a dream. We read the angel’s words in Matthew 1:20,

“Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.”

The New Testament writers emphasize that it is in Jesus that the Old Testament hope is fulfilled. Matthew quotes Isaiah 42:1 in Matthew 12:18 of his gospel. Luke quotes Isaiah 61:1 in his gospel at 4:18. Both evangelists comment that Jesus is the fulfilment of the prophecy. He is the one supremely anointed by the Spirit of God.

We find that the role of the Spirit in Jesus’ ministry is stressed at certain key points in his life. All four gospels tell us of the descent of the Spirit at Jesus’ baptism. Here is how John puts it in John 1:32. He quotes the words of John the Baptist:

“I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him.”

After his baptism Mark 1:12 tells us:

“At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert...”

It was the Holy Spirit who led Jesus into his time of temptation. Then, in Luke 4:14 we learn that:

“Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside.”

He is now beginning his public ministry.

Part of his ministry involved casting out demons. Jesus himself says in Matthew 12:28:

“I drive out demons by the Spirit of God...”

The real purpose of Jesus’ ministry was to die on the cross for the sins of the world. We learn from Hebrews 9:14 that he offered himself:

“...through the eternal Spirit...”

And his resurrection was equally the achievement of the Spirit. 1Timothy 3:16 describes Jesus’ resurrection as his vindication, and says that he was:

“...vindicated by the Spirit...”

In all that he was and all that he did Jesus possessed the Spirit according to John 3:34:

“without limit.”

On the Day of Pentecost the long promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit took place. We read about the event in Acts chapter 2. Peter preached on that day. He told his audience that this was the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy. He quoted several verses from Joel chapter 2, finishing with the words of Acts 2:21:

"...everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

This indicates the great work of the Holy Spirit in the present age. He enables people of every nation to call upon the name of Jesus, the only name by which we must be saved, as Acts 4:12 says. Peter went on to preach Jesus in the power of the Spirit, and three thousand people were converted.

Chapter 3: What Jesus said about the Holy Spirit

Most of Jesus' teaching about the Holy Spirit comes during his farewell address in the upper room. It is recorded in John chapters 14-16.

Jesus uses two titles for the Holy Spirit. The first is 'paraclete'. It comes four times: in John 14:16 and 26, 15:26, and 16:7. I use this direct equivalent of the Greek word, because there is a lot of discussion

about the best way to translate it. The most frequent words used are 'helper', 'comforter', and 'counsellor'. The text which throws most light on the word 'paraclete' is probably 1 John 2:1. Here Jesus is called our paraclete, and is usually translated as 'advocate'. The New International Version gives an extended translation which explains the meaning of this term: he is '*one who speaks in our defence*'. This is certainly the most common meaning of the Greek word, and I think it is helpful in understanding the work of the Holy Spirit. As the advancing church faces a persecuting world, the Holy Spirit vindicates the Christian message to the minds of those who hear the gospel.

The second title which Jesus uses is 'Spirit of truth'. It comes in John 14:17, 15:26 and 16:13. A few verses earlier, in chapter 14:6, Jesus had said:

"I am ... the truth."

In chapter 17:17 he identifies God's Word with the truth. Jesus is the embodiment of that Word, and the Holy Spirit is the invisible, spiritual representation of Jesus.

In his teaching on the Spirit Jesus talks both about where the Spirit comes from and where he comes to. In John 14:16 he indicates that the Father gives the Spirit, or, as John 15:26 puts it, the Spirit comes out

from or proceeds from the Father. John 14:26 says that the Father sends the Spirit in Jesus' name, and in chapter 16:7 Jesus says that he himself sends the Spirit. In John 15: 26 he adds that he sends the Spirit from the Father.

This means that the Holy Spirit is a divine gift to us, and that he is sent with a purpose. The Holy Spirit is Jesus' officially appointed delegate. He makes the risen Christ a reality amongst his people. And the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are united in this common mission.

As for where the Spirit comes to, Jesus tells us in two ways, negatively, and positively. Negatively, John 14:17 says that the Spirit is not received by the world. This would be impossible, because the world

“neither sees him nor knows him.”

In one sense, of course, it is obvious that the world cannot see the Holy Spirit. After all, he is invisible. But what Jesus means is that the world does not have the spiritual perception to penetrate beyond what is merely visible.

Positively, however, the Holy Spirit comes to Jesus' followers. In John 14:16 Jesus tells his disciples the Holy Spirit would be with them forever. Immediately he goes on to say in the next verse that the Holy

Spirit will not just be with his disciples, but in them, and the result is that they know him.

At the time when Jesus was saying these things their fulfilment was still in the future. Jesus emphasizes that it is when he departs that the Spirit will come. Here is chapter 16:7:

“It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.”

Jesus speaks of a fourfold ministry which the Holy Spirit would perform.

First, he has a teaching ministry. In John 14:26 Jesus says:

“...the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

The two ideas of teaching and bringing to remembrance what Jesus taught are one and the same thing. The Holy Spirit does not teach new doctrine. He leads the disciples beyond a merely limited grasp of Jesus' teaching into a full understanding of all that Jesus meant in his words and actions. As Jesus puts it in John 16:13:

“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears...”

So the work of the Holy Spirit is not revelation, but interpretation. This must be true, because, as Hebrews 1:1-2 make clear, Jesus the Son is God’s last Word. The Spirit’s teaching ministry comes to fruition in the apostles’ inspired explanation of Jesus which forms our New Testament.

Next, the Holy Spirit has an evangelistic ministry. In John 15:26, Jesus says:

“he will testify about me.”

In John 16:14 he says:

“He will bring glory to me...”

The Spirit bears witness to Jesus through the preaching of the gospel by Christian people. In John’s gospel, Jesus’ glorification is a way of speaking of his death and resurrection. For the Holy Spirit to glorify Jesus is to unfold the meaning of these central events as they are proclaimed throughout the world.

Third, the Holy Spirit has a prophetic ministry.

“He will declare to you the things that are to come”

is what Jesus says in John 16:13. The glorious future awaiting Jesus and his followers is a theme needed to encourage believers struggling through dark days. Jesus taught about the end of the age. He stressed the truth of his return. And part of the Spirit’s role in bringing his teaching to remembrance was to enable the apostles to express the eschatological truth about the kingdom of Christ as it will be at the end of time after his second coming.

Finally, the Holy Spirit has a convicting ministry. Jesus refers to this in John 16: 8-11:

“When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.”

It is the work of the Spirit to convince sinners that their chief sin is failure to believe in Christ, and so to lead them to faith in him.

Chapter 4: What the apostles say about the Holy Spirit

Some have seen the Holy Spirit as the main theme of Paul's theology. While that is probably an exaggeration, it is certainly true that he gives the Holy Spirit a prominent place. In his letters there are four main areas of teaching about the Holy Spirit. Three of these are covered in this chapter, and the next chapter will be devoted to the fourth. This chapter also outlines what 1 John says about the experience of the Spirit.

First, there is the filling of the Spirit. Ephesians 5:18 literally says:

"...keep on being filled up by the Spirit".

The filling of the Spirit is not a one-off experience. In this verse Paul contrasts being filled with the Spirit with drunkenness and debauchery. This implies that the filling of the Spirit leads to self-control.

Secondly, we come to the fruit of the Spirit. The key text here is Galatians 5:22-23:

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."

This is a picture of the Christian life, with deep roots in the soil of the Spirit. The singular word, *'fruit'* reminds us that the spiritual qualities expected of a believer all hang together. We cannot pick and choose which fruits we will display. The fruit of the Spirit is more like a bunch of bananas than a basket of oranges; because bananas are linked to each other. So it is with each part of the fruit of the Spirit, they are all linked together and so each believer is to display the entire fruit and leave no part out. This passage ends with the phrase:

"Against such things there is no law."

This is a way of saying that the fruit of the Spirit is obedience to God's law.

The third area of teaching in Paul's letters brings together the twin ideas of the sealing of the Spirit and the Spirit as a guarantee. Paul uses both terms together in 2 Corinthians 1:22, which says that God has

"set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come."

The term 'guarantee' comes again later in 2 Corinthians 5:5 which says that God

“has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.”

Both terms come together again in Ephesians 1:13-14:

“And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.”

The idea of sealing also reappears later in Ephesians 4:30:

“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”

There is another text which helps us to get the flavour of the word ‘sealing’. When Jesus was buried the chief priests asked Pilate to make his tomb secure so that no one could get in to steal the body and then claim that Jesus was alive again. Pilate said in Matthew 27:65:

“Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how.”

Then we read in verse 66:

“So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.”

Sealing speaks of security. The Holy Spirit is our protection in all the testings and sufferings of life. It is by his power that we are kept to the end.

In speaking of the Spirit as the guarantee the apostle Paul borrows a concept used in the purchase of a large item, such as a house or a piece of land. The buyer does not have the full price available straightaway, so he pays a deposit. This is a goodwill guarantee that the rest of the money will follow in due course. The deposit is the first instalment of the payment to come. So the Holy Spirit is the first instalment of heaven. Our experience of the Spirit’s power in our hearts and lives gives us a little foretaste of the glory to come.

In Romans 8:23 Paul uses a different metaphor, but he is expressing the same idea. He says that we

“...have the firstfruits of the Spirit...”

The firstfruits is the earliest ripened grain at harvest time. It is a promise that the rest of the harvest will follow in time. The Spirit is an appetiser of heaven.

His indwelling presence is our assurance that we shall enter heavenly glory one day.

It is a matter of debate whether the sealing and guarantee of the Spirit are matters of subjective experience or only objective facts. The main function of the sealing appears to be Godward. We are secure because he has marked us as his own. However, the guarantee must have a subjective aspect, otherwise it cannot be a source of assurance for us.

There are two verses in 1 John which emphasize this subjective element. It is the believer's privilege to experience the Spirit. 1 John 3:24 says:

“And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.”

Then in 1 John 4:13 John continues:

“We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.”

These statements only make sense if we can know from experience that we have received the Spirit. John does not merely take it for granted that all professing believers have received the Spirit. He does not simply infer the presence of the Spirit from a person's profession of faith. It was a matter of

experience. Paul makes the same point in Romans 8:9, which says:

“You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.”

Notice the direction of the argument here. Paul is not saying, “all Christians have the Spirit, so if you are a Christian you have the Spirit”. What he is saying is this: “all Christians have the Spirit, so if you do not have the Spirit you are not a Christian”.

John gives two particular marks of the Spirit's presence in a person's life: a sound confession of the human nature of Jesus Christ, and the reflection in our life of his life of love. That is the theme of 1 John 4. In Romans 8 Paul also sees the evidence of the Spirit's presence in a transformed attitude of mind, leading to a life of obedience.

Chapter 5: The gifts of the Spirit

The key passage to consider is 1 Corinthians 12-14. The word 'gifts' is actually just one term amongst several. In 1 Corinthians 12:4-6, Paul uses three different terms in quick succession – gifts, service, and activities – but they all mean the same thing. Whichever one is used, the next verse makes the point that every gift is a 'manifestation of the Spirit'. The gifts are the means by which the invisible Spirit is made evident in the life of the church. Nine manifestations are listed in verses 8-10. Verse 11 then emphasizes that the distribution of gifts depends on what the Holy Spirit sees as appropriate.

The subject of the gifts is really part of a larger issue, which Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27. The church is a body into which the Spirit has placed us all individually. We have different personalities, and therefore differences of potential to contribute to church life. Some people are better at working with their hands, others have deeper spiritual insight, but all are needed. Then in verse 28 the apostle mentions various roles which were found in the church. Four of them were not mentioned in the earlier list, so a total of thirteen activities are mentioned in the chapter.

The question is often asked whether these gifts are for today. It's interesting to note what John Chrysostom said. He was a Christian teacher and

preacher about 250 years after New Testament times. He said that the gifts of the Spirit had ceased so long ago that no one could now be sure of their characteristics. If that was true then, how much more must it be true today, 2000 years after New Testament times!

There are probably two categories of gifts which have definitely ceased: the sign gifts which were designed to authenticate the ministry of the apostles, and the revelatory gifts which were given as a temporary provision pending the completion of the New Testament. The rest of the gifts are still needed, but a comparison with Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Peter 4:10-11 suggest that Paul is only giving a few examples, not producing an exhaustive catalogue of spiritual gifts.

1 Corinthians 14 deals with the issue of speaking in tongues. This is an important issue for the church worldwide today. We need to remember that 'tongue' is the normal word for a language. The chapter begins by pointing out that it is better to prophesy than to speak in a foreign language, because the really important thing is that people should be built up. However, if someone speaks a foreign language in church he is not speaking to other people, only to God, and the only person whom he builds up is himself. So there is no real benefit for the church. Paul therefore wishes that everyone would prophesy rather than speak in tongues.

When we get to 1 Corinthians 14:14f we come to a section of the chapter where Paul refers to praying and singing in the Spirit and praying and singing with the mind. Some people think that the apostle is making a distinction between these two things. Praying or singing in the Spirit is different from praying or singing with the mind. More likely, the second thing is a definition of the first. What does it mean to pray in the Spirit? It involves using the mind. How do we sing in the Spirit? By singing thoughtfully and intelligently.

Paul is certainly thankful that he can speak foreign languages. He says so in verse 18. He is meeting so many people. There are times when he needs to be able to communicate across different cultures. However, gatherings of believers are the not the place for displaying linguistic ability.

In verse 22, Paul describes tongues as a sign. The thing about a sign is that you do not stop there. It points you to somewhere else. Suppose I am on a cycle ride. I am going to Delhi (or perhaps Capetown) to meet some friends. After cycling for several hours, I finally see a sign saying 'Delhi 20 kilometres' (or 'Capetown 20 kilometres'). How foolish I would be if I said, 'Wonderful, here at last', and then locked up my bike and sat down and waited for my friends to come! The sign is not where you stop. The sign says, 'keep

going, you are not there yet, but you are getting there'.

Speaking in tongues was a sign which God gave to the church in its infancy. But the sign is not where the church had to stop. We must not expect this gift still to be around where the church has reached maturity with the completion of the canon of Scripture.

In 1 Corinthians 14: 26 the apostle continues like this:

“When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. “

This is sometimes read as an indication of the kind of worship service that Scripture is advocating. More likely it is a description of the kind of worship service taking place at Corinth – chaotic. That is why Paul goes on to set restrictions. If the church insists on using tongues, only men should use this gift, and there should only be two, or as an absolute maximum, three words in tongues in any gathering. A translation should always be given, so that those who do not understand the tongue can still receive edification.

1 Corinthians 14:33 implies that where worship is unplanned and unstructured, God is not present. There should be peace, the various elements of

worship fitting together harmoniously. The chapter ends by commending a proper order in Christian worship, guided by the Word because it is always the main vehicle of the Spirit's power.

Sandwiched between 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 is a beautiful passage on the theme of love. All the gifts of the Spirit are worth nothing unless they are exercised in love. A loving, patient, tolerant church is a church which is filled with the Spirit. A fellowship where people show one another respect and avoid treating one another rudely – that is a fellowship where you can see real evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 6: The baptism of the Spirit

This is another issue which is a matter of vigorous debate these days. What is the baptism of the Spirit? There are seven New Testament texts which use this language. We must examine them in order to understand what the Bible means by the baptism of the Spirit.

We first hear of this subject from the lips of John the Baptist. All four gospels record his words as he preached by the Jordan. Here is how Luke 3:16 puts it:

“I baptise you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”

Just before his ascension Jesus referred back to John's words. This is what he says in Acts 1:5:

“For John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.”

What John predicted is about to happen.

The next reference to the baptism of the Holy Spirit comes in Acts 11:16. Peter remembers how Jesus made that statement shortly before he ascended, and verse 15 indicates that Peter understood Pentecost to be the fulfilment of Jesus' words. Here, Peter is referring to the way that the Holy Spirit fell on the household of Cornelius:

“As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. Then I remembered what the Lord had said: ‘John baptised with water, but you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.’”

The Holy Spirit falling is clearly an alternative way of speaking of the baptism of the Spirit. We read of an

earlier occasion when the Holy Spirit fell on people in Acts 8:14-17. This took place in Samaria.

“When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.”

Receiving the Holy Spirit is yet another way of describing the same phenomenon. Peter had promised this experience to the crowd which heard him preach on the Day of Pentecost. This is what he says in Acts 2:38:

“Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Yet another term is used alongside ‘receiving the Spirit’ in Acts 19:1-6:

“While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples and asked them, ‘Did

you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?’ They answered, ‘No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.’ So Paul asked, ‘Then what baptism did you receive? ‘John’s baptism,’ they replied. Paul said, ‘John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.’ On hearing this, they were baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.”

The Holy Spirit coming upon people is another way of speaking of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

There are, then, four major events recorded in Acts. There was Pentecost at Jerusalem in Acts 2. In Acts 8 the Samaritans experienced the falling of the Spirit. In Acts 10 there is an outpouring of the Spirit upon the Gentiles that Peter refers to in Acts 11. And in Acts 19 the Spirit comes upon the men at Ephesus.

Apparently, there was a baptism of the Spirit each time the gospel broke new ground. The order of these events roughly corresponds with the outward movement of Christian witness which Jesus indicated in Acts 1:8, when he said:

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in

Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

The location in Acts 2 is in Jerusalem and Judea. Acts 8 finds us in Samaria. In Acts 10 the movement towards the ends of the earth is beginning. Acts 19 finds the gospel penetrating new Gentile territory.

It seems that the baptism of the Spirit is to be understood primarily in a geographical way. It represents the coming of the gospel to a new geographical or cultural sphere. Acts 19 reminds us that the Gentile world is large and diverse, and so a new baptism of the Spirit takes place as the movement towards the ends of the earth progresses.

In the history of gospel expansion since the close of the New Testament era, the gospel has continued to break new ground. Every time a new area is reached with the gospel we may speak of a baptism of the Spirit there. Whenever an unreached people group is evangelised by pioneer missionaries and people are converted, the Holy Spirit has fallen there.

Perhaps we can also speak of a baptism of the Spirit when an area where the gospel has been known is suddenly blessed with revival. God moves in power and saves people in greater numbers than normal. The Holy Spirit is poured out abundantly upon the

preaching of the gospel, and a great impact for godliness is made on society as a whole.

But Peter's words in Acts 2:38 point out that it is necessary for the individual to enter into the baptism of the Spirit. Paul also refers to this in 1 Corinthians 12:13:

“For we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.”

This is a way of describing conversion. And it highlights the truth that every individual conversion is a miracle accomplished by the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 7: What the Church's Creeds and Confessions say about the Holy Spirit

During the first three or four hundred years after the New Testament period the early church put the main doctrines of the Bible into an orderly form. The result was creeds which are still accepted by churches everywhere as brilliant summaries of basic Christian truth.

The Creeds say, 'I believe in the Holy Spirit'. This phrase exactly parallels an earlier phrase in the creed, 'I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of

heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ his only begotten Son, our Lord'. By using the same expression the creed gives the Holy Spirit equal status with the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is a distinct Person within the Godhead (Trinity), and yet at the same time he is equally divine with the Father and the Son. All the divine attributes are found in the Holy Spirit. He is equally worthy of worship with the Father and the Son. And yet there is only one God, and he must not be divided into three.

In trying to put into words the mystery of the Trinity, the creeds came up with a particular form of words. The Father is neither created nor begotten. The Son is not created but is begotten. The Holy Spirit is not created or begotten, but proceeds. The concern of our predecessors in Christian thinking was both to preserve the unity of God and to maintain the distinctness of each of the three Persons of the Trinity. This distinctness is essential to the nature of God, and yet there is only one God.

The creeds recognise that the Holy Spirit spoke by the prophets. As we read the Bible we are hearing the voice of the Spirit.

The creeds also speak of the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to Jesus Christ. It was by the power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus was conceived by the virgin Mary. The person whom she conceived was truly

God, and that was only possible through the exertion of the Spirit's power.

The creeds then tell of the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to us. He is called the life-giver. This is an echo of Jesus' words in John 6:63:

"The Spirit gives life..."

Jesus is speaking of the necessity of the Holy Spirit to give new life to a person in regeneration. The apostle Paul speaks in a similar way in 2 Corinthians 3:6, where he writes:

"the Spirit gives life."

In this context there is a contrast between the old and new covenants. Part of the newness of the new covenant is the vastly increased manifestation of the Spirit as compared with the old covenant.

At the time of the Reformation, many new Confessions of Faith were produced. They repeated many of the things which the early creeds had already said. But they added some extra comments as well. They spoke at greater length about the work of the Spirit in relation to Scripture. The Holy Spirit inspired the Bible, and still speaks through the Bible. He works along with the Bible. The gospel comes both in Word and in Spirit. The Spirit says nothing

additional to the Word, but unless he takes up the Word as it is proclaimed it remains a dead letter and achieves nothing.

The Confessions also enlarged on the work of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of sinners. Without his work we would remain dead in sin. It is the Holy Spirit who calls sinners powerfully and irresistibly to come to Christ. It is the Holy Spirit who gives us understanding, faith, and repentance. We are born again by the Spirit. It is not something we can do for ourselves. By the Spirit our hearts are purified from sin, and we are united to Christ.

It is by the Holy Spirit that we continue in the Christian life. He sanctifies us and enables us to live in separation from the world. It is by his power that we persevere to the end. The Holy Spirit brings us assurance of salvation, and comforts us in all our trials. He gives us strength for the battle with the world, the flesh and the devil, and helps us as we pray. He is the promise of our eternal glory, and the source of our peace and joy.

The Confessions also speak of the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the church. It is the Spirit who gathers, defends, and preserves the church. He governs the church by means of the Word, and maintains our unity. Within that unity he distributes different gifts, but all the gifts serve to bring Christ

near to his people. The Holy Spirit empowers Christian worship. He brings the Word to life, and makes it powerful and effective in the hearts and lives of the hearers.

In view of these things, how should we respond? We must seek to be filled afresh with the Holy Spirit every day, so that we can bear the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. We may derive comfort from the presence of the Holy Spirit, and rejoice in the assurance of salvation which he brings us. But we must never separate the work of the Spirit from the work of Christ. All that the Holy Spirit does involves applying the benefits of Christ's redemption. The Spirit works through the Word of God, so we must take the Spirit-inspired Scriptures very seriously, and pray for the Spirit's enlightenment for ourselves and for those to whom we preach. We must go on preaching the gospel of God's grace in Jesus Christ. As we do so, we must pray earnestly that the Spirit will use the Word for the conversion of the lost. And we must long and pray earnestly for true revival.

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