

The Holy Spirit's Work



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First, in Salvation

In the nineteenth chapter of Acts, we learn that when the apostle Paul came to Ephesus, he asked some disciples of John the Baptist, "Have ye received the Holy Spirit since ye believed?" (Acts 19:2). And we are told, "They said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Spirit." Sad to say, history has repeated itself. Without doubt, were the members of hundreds of so-called "churches" (in which modernism and worldliness rule) asked this same question, they would be obliged to return the identical answer. The reason why those disciples at Ephesus knew not about the Holy Spirit was, most probably, because they had been baptized in Judaea by the forerunner of Christ and then had returned to Ephesus in ignorance of what had taken place on the day of Pentecost. But the reason why the members of the average "church" today know nothing about the third Person of the Godhead is that the preachers they sit under are silent concerning Him.

Nor is it very much better with many of the churches still counted as orthodox. Though the Person of the Spirit may not be repudiated, and though His *name* may occasionally be mentioned, yet only on rare occasions is there any definite scriptural teaching given out concerning the offices and operations of the divine Comforter. In the majority of places where the Lord Jesus is still formally acknowledged to be the only Saviour for sinners, the current teaching of the day is that Christ made it possible for me to be saved. As to the Holy Spirit's work *in salvation*, this is very little understood even by professing Christians. The idea now so widely prevailing is that Christ is offered to man's acceptance, and that *he* must "surrender," "Give his heart to Jesus," "Take his stand for Christ," etc., if the blood of the cross is to avail for his sins. Thus, according to this conception, the finished work of Christ, the greatest work of all time, in all the universe, is left contingent on the fickle will of man as to whether it shall be a success or a failure.

Entering now a much narrower circle in Christendom, in places where it is yet owned that the Holy Spirit has a mission and ministry

in connection with the preaching of the Gospel, the general idea that prevails even there is that, when the Gospel of Christ is faithfully preached, the Holy Spirit convicts men of sin and reveals to them their need of a Saviour. But beyond this, very few indeed are prepared to go. The theory prevailing in these places is that the sinner has to *co-operate* with the Spirit, that he must *yield to* the Spirit's "striving" or he will not and cannot be saved. But this pernicious and God-insulting theory denies two things. To argue that the natural man is capable of co-operating with the Spirit is to deny that he is "*dead in trespasses and sins,*" for a dead man is incapable of doing anything. And to say that the operations of the Spirit in a man's heart and conscience may be resisted and withstood is to deny His omnipotence. Ere proceeding farther, and in order to clear the way for what is to follow, a few words need to be said on, "My spirit shall not always strive with man" (Gen. 6:3), and "Ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye" (Acts 7:51). Now these passages refer to the *external* word of the Spirit—that is to His testimony through the preached Word. 1 Peter 3:18-20 shows that it was the Spirit of Christ *in Noah* who "strove" with the antediluvians, as the patriarch preached to them (2 Pet. 2:5). So in Acts 7:52, the very next words explain verse 51—"Which of the *prophets* have not your fathers persecuted?" As Nehemiah said, "Many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy spirit *in thy prophets*" (Neh. 9:30).

The external work of the Spirit, His testimony through the Scriptures as it falls upon the outward ear of the natural man, is *always* "resisted" and rejected, which only affords solemn and full demonstration of the awful fact that the "carnal mind is enmity against God" (Rom. 8:7). But what we would now point out is that Scripture reveals another work of the Holy Spirit, a work that is internal, imperceptible, invisible. This work is always *efficacious*. *It is the Spirit's work in salvation*, begun in the heart at the new birth, continued or sustained throughout the whole course of the Christian's life on earth, and concluded and consummated in heaven. This is what is referred to in Philippians 1:6, "He which hath begun a good work in you will finish it." This is what is in view in Psalm 138:8, "The LORD will perfect that which

concerneth me.” This work is wrought by the Spirit in each of God’s elect and in them alone.

It has been said that, “The part or office of the Holy Spirit in salvation of God’s elect consists in *renewing them*. He quickens the heirs of glory with a spiritual life, enlightens their minds to know Christ, reveals Him to them, forms Him in their hearts, and brings them to build all their hopes of eternal glory on Him alone. He sheds abroad the Father’s love in their hearts, and gives them a real sense of it. In which experience of His gracious and effectual work in their souls, they are made to say with the Psalmist, ‘Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts’ (Psa. 65:4).”—S. E. Pierce (1746-1829).

One of the delusions of the day is that an evangelical-believing in Christ lies within the power of the unrenewed man, so that by performing what is naively called, “a simple act of faith,” he becomes a renewed man. In other words, it is supposed that man is the beginner of his own salvation. *He* takes the first step, and God does the rest. *He* “believes,” and then God comes in and saves him. This is nothing but a bald and blank denial of the Spirit’s work altogether. If there is one time more than another when the sinner lies in need of the Spirit’s power, it is *at the beginning*. “He who denies the need of the Spirit at the *beginning*, cannot believe in His work at the after stages—nay, cannot believe in the need of the Spirit’s work at all. The mightiest and most insuperable difficulty lies at the beginning. If the sinner can get over *that* without the Spirit, he can easily get over the rest. If he does not need the Spirit to enable him to believe, he will not need him to enable him to love” (Horatius Bonar, 1808-1889).

They err greatly who think that, *after* the Spirit has done His work in the conscience, it still remains for man to say whether he shall be regenerated or not, whether he shall believe or not. The Spirit of God does not wait for the sinner to exercise his will *to* believe, instead He works in the elect, “*both to will and to do*” (Phil. 2:13). Therefore does JEHOVAH declare, “I am found of them that sought me *not*” (Isa. 65:1)—quoted by Paul in Romans 10:20. To “believe” in Christ savingly is a supernatural act, the product of supernatural grace. There is no more power in fallen man to believe to the saving

of his soul than he has any merits of his own entitling him to the favour of God. Thus, he is dependent on the Spirit for power as on Christ for worthiness. The Spirit's work is to *apply* the redemption which the Lord Jesus purchased for His people, and the children of God owe their salvation to the One as much as to the Other.

In Titus 3:5, the *salvation* of the redeemed is expressly attributed to God the Spirit, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, *by* the washing of regeneration and renewing of *the Holy Spirit*." "If it be asked in what sense men can be said to be 'saved' by the renewing of the Spirit, when the salvation is in Christ, the answer is obvious. There is a series of truths to which no link can be wanting. We are saved by the divine purpose, for God hath chosen us to salvation. We are saved by the atonement, as the meritorious ground of all. We are saved by faith as the bond of union to Christ. We are saved by grace as contrasted with works done. We are saved by the truth. We are saved by the renewing of the Holy Spirit, as producing faith in the heart" (Professor George Smeaton, 1814-1889).

1. *Regeneration is by the Spirit*

"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). The quickening of those who are dead in trespasses is the work of the third Person of the Trinity, "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). The natural man is spiritually dead. He is alive sinward and worldward, but dead Godward—"alienated from the life of God" (Eph. 4:18). If this solemn truth were really believed, there would be an end of controversy on our present subject. A dead man *cannot* "co-operate" with the Spirit, nor can he "accept Christ." In 2 Corinthians 3:5, we read, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything." That is said of Christians. If the regenerate have no capacity to "think" spiritually, still less are the unregenerate able to.

"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14). What could be plainer? The "natural man" is fallen in his *unregenerate* state. Unless he be born from above, he is completely devoid of spiritual discernment.

Our Lord expressly declared, “Except a man be born again, he *cannot see* the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). The “natural man” cannot see himself, his ruin, his depravity, the filthiness of his own righteousness. No matter how plainly God’s truth be presented to him, being blind, he cannot discern either meaning, its spirituality, or its suitedness to his need. A spiritual understanding of the Gospel is as truly due to the operation of the Holy Spirit as that He is the Author of divine revelation. Spiritual life must precede spiritual sight, and the Spirit Himself must enter the heart before there is life, “And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live” (Ezek. 37:14).

The work of the Spirit in regeneration is a divine miracle which is the result of His forthputting of supernatural power. It is the quickening of a spiritual corpse. It is the bringing of a dead soul to life. The sinner himself can no more accomplish it by an act of his own will than he can create a universe. This miracle of grace is spoken of in Scripture as, “The exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead” (Eph. 1:19-20). “The same power which was put forth to raise Christ from the dead, is put forth in regeneration....Christ’s resurrection is the exemplary pattern of our spiritual resurrection, according to which, as the Spirit wrought in Him, so He works in us a work conformed to His resurrection. As the resurrection of Christ was the great declaration of His being the Son of God, so is regeneration of our being sons of God, being the evidence of our adoption, and also the first discovery of our election. As Christ’s resurrection is the first step to His eternal glory, so regeneration is the first open introduction into all the blessings of that state of grace into which the child of God is now introduced” (S. E. Pierce).

2. Meetness for Heaven is by the Spirit

Our *title* to the glory lies in the righteousness of Christ. Our personal *fitness* for it lies in the Holy Spirit’s regeneration of us. Writing to the regenerated at Colosse, the apostle said, “Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light” (Col. 1:12). And then he shows *wherein* this *meetness* consists, “Who hath delivered us from the

power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col. 1:13). Their title is without them, their “meetness” within. The Holy Spirit has created in them a nature which is capacitated to know and enjoy the Triune God.

In our unregenerate state, we were completely under the power of darkness, that is, of sin and Satan, and we were less able to deliver ourselves from this bondage than Jonah was able to escape from the belly of the whale. We “sat in darkness” and “in the region and shadow of death” (Matt. 4:16). We were “captives,” “bound,” and “in prison” (Isa. 61:1). We were those “having *no* hope, and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12). From this dreadful state, every renewed soul has been “delivered” by the gracious, sovereign, invincible power of the Holy Spirit, and has been “translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son.” Then, let each renewed reader give equal homage, adoration, worship to Him, as to the Father and the Son.

3. Justification and Sanctification are by the Spirit

“And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and *by the Spirit* of our God” (1 Cor. 6:11). This is a remarkable Scripture and little pondered. It would lead us too far away from our present theme were we to attempt a full exposition of it. Two things only would we barely point out. The three saving blessings enumerated in this verse are referred, first, to the “name” or merits of Christ as the procuring cause, and then, to the Holy Spirit, who makes the elect partakers of them, by His own effectual application. He it is who enlightens their minds and opens their hearts to take in and be assured that they *are* “washed, sanctified and justified.”

4. Faith is from the Spirit

A deeply taught servant of God once wrote to a young preacher, “Never represent faith as being an act so ‘simple’ that the work of the Spirit is not needed to produce it.” Yet this is what has been commonly done. A great many of the evangelists of the past hundred years have displayed a zeal which was not according to knowledge (Rom. 10:2), and manifested a far greater concern to see

souls saved than to preach the truth of God in its purity. In their efforts to show the *simplicity* of the “way of salvation,” they have lost sight of the *difficulties* of salvation (Luke 18:24; 1 Pet. 4:18). In their pressing of the responsibility of man to believe, they have ignored the fact that none can believe till the Spirit imparts faith. To present Christ to the sinner, and then throw him back on his own will, is to mock his helplessness. The work of the Spirit in the heart is as real and urgent a need as was the work of Christ on the cross. For the heart truly to believe in and trust God is a *spiritual* act, a “good fruit,” and if fallen man possesses inherent power to do good, then to present the atonement to him is altogether needless.

There is no middle ground between death and life, no intermediate stage between conversion and non-conversion. The bestowal of eternal life is instantaneous. We are “*created* in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:10). It is a most serious error to suppose that after the Spirit of God has done His work in the sinner, it still remains for him to say whether he shall believe or not. All who are the recipients of His supernatural operations *are* regenerated, effectually converted, and actually believe. It is not that the Spirit imparts capacity to believe and then waits for the individual to exercise his will to believe. No, He works in the “both to will *and* to do” (Phil. 2:13). I may tell a man that in the next room there is a lighted lamp, and he may not believe me. But let me bring it into the room where he is, so that he sees the light for himself, and he is irresistibly persuaded. So a servant of God may tell a man that Christ is sufficient for the chief of sinners, and he believes not. But when Christ is “*revealed in him*” (Gal. 1:16), he cannot but trust Him—see 2 Corinthians 4:6.

How perversely men *reverse* the order of God’s truth. They urge dead sinners to come to Christ, supposing they have power of will to do so, whereas Christ has plainly and emphatically stated that, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him” (John 6:44). “Coming to Christ” is the affections of the heart being drawn out towards Him, and how can one love a person he *knows not?* (see John 4:10). Ah, it is the Spirit who must bring Christ to me, reveal Him in me, before I can truly know Him. “Coming to Christ” is an *inward* and *spiritual* act, not an outward

and natural one. Truly, “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14). We cannot so much as “see” Christ until we are born again (John 3:3).

Saving grace is something more than an objective fact presented to us. It is a subjective operation wrought within us. As it is not by *natural* discernment that I discover my need of Christ, so it is not by my natural strength and will that I “come” to Him. There must be life and light (sight) before there can be motion. A babe has to be born, and have strength and sight too, before it is able to “come” to its parent. Believing in Christ is a supernatural act, the product of supernatural power. One may, by means of grammatical phrases and spiritual propositions, teach spiritual truth to another, but he cannot illumine his mind with respect thereto. He may tell a man that God is holy, but he cannot impart to him a *consciousness* that God is holy. He may tell him that sin is infinitely heinous, but he cannot beget in him a *feeling* or heart realization that it is so. To those who were well acquainted with him outwardly, Christ said, “Ye neither know me nor my Father” (John 8:19). A man may “know the way of righteousness” (2 Pet. 2:21) theoretically, intellectually, but that is a vastly different matter (though very few are inwardly aware of it) from a spiritual and experimental acquaintance with it.

“We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak” (2 Cor. 4:13). Here the Spirit of God is spoken of according to the work which He performs. “The title ‘*Spirit of faith*’ intimates that the Holy Spirit is the Author of faith, for all men have not faith. That is, it is not given to all and does not belong to all (2 Thess. 3:2). The designation means that the procuring cause of faith is the Holy Spirit, who produces this effect by an invincible call, an invitation which accompanies, according to the good pleasure of His will, the external proclamation of the Gospel. The faith, therefore, of which He is the Author, is not effected by the hearer’s own effectual will....The special operation of the Spirit inclines the sinner previously disinclined, to receive the invitation of the Gospel. For it is He alone, acting as the Spirit of faith, that removes the

enmity of the carnal mind to those doctrines of the cross which, but for this, would seem to him unnecessary, or foolish and offensive” (Professor George Smeaton).

Writing to the Philippian saints, the apostle declared, “Unto you it is *given*...to believe on him” (Phil. 1:29). Faith is God’s “gift,” as Ephesians 2:8-9 positively affirms. It is not a gift *offered* for man’s acceptance, but actually conferred upon God’s children, breathed into them. It is imparted to each of God’s elect, at His appointed time, by the Holy Spirit. It is not produced by the creature’s will, but is of the “faith of *the operation* of God” (Col. 2:12). We read of “the *work* of God’s children, breathed into them.” It is the “work” of the Spirit, by His supernatural action. The Holy Spirit is given by Christ to this end, that each of those for whom He died should be brought to a saving knowledge of the truth. Therefore, we are told, “Who by him [not by our wills] do believe in God” (1 Pet. 1:21). In 1 Corinthians 3:5, it is said, “By whom ye believed, even as the *Lord* gave to every man.” So in Ephesians 6:23, it is declared, “Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, *from* God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” The very degree and strength of our faith is determined solely by God. “Think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the *measure* of faith” (Rom. 12:3). If by grace, you are truly a “believer,” let the reader give God the Spirit honour, glory, and praise for it.

5. Salvation is wholly applied by the Spirit

“We are bound to give thanks always 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” (2 Thess. 2:13). The mission of the Spirit in the earth is to apply to God’s elect the redemption purposed by the Father and purchased by the Son for them. The Holy Spirit is here to make good in the souls of the heirs of glory the fruits of the travail of Christ’s soul. This He does by means of the Gospel, by the written and oral ministry of the Scriptures, for the Word of God is the *only* instrument He employs or uses. The Word of God is “the word of life” (Phil. 2:16), but it only becomes such in the experience of the individual soul by the immediate operation and application of the

Spirit of God. As Paul wrote to the Thessalonian saints, “For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit” (1 Thess. 1:5). This is not to deny the efficacy of the Word itself, but is to insist that the direct agency of the Spirit on the heart is absolutely necessary in order to the *reception* of the Word. The Word is a lamp unto our path, but there must be an opening of the eyes of our understanding by the Spirit before we can *see* its light.

The salvation of God’s elect was purposed, planned, and provided by God the Father before the foundation of the world. It was procured and secured by the incarnation, obedience, death, and resurrection of God the Son. It is made known, applied to, and wrought in them by God the Spirit. Thus, “Salvation is of the LORD” (Jonah 2:9), and man has no part in it at any point whatsoever. The child of God is not the earner, but the recipient of it. Faith is not the condition which the elect sinner must perform in order to obtain salvation, but is the means and channel through which he personally *enjoys* the salvation of the Triune JEHOVAH.

The Holy Spirit’s Work

Secondly, in the Saved

“The transcendent grace of God is the glorious subject of the everlasting Gospel. It is revealed in it, proclaimed by the preaching of it, in its meridian splendour, in its utmost perfection, and with the utmost plainness and freeness *to sinners as sinners*. The Gospel of salvation is accompanied by the Holy Spirit with life and light to elect sinners, and made the power of God unto their salvation. By it, they hear Christ’s voice, see His glory, behold how He loved them, receive Him into their hearts, live by faith on the Son of God, and find and enjoy every blessing of the Father’s everlasting love and boundless mercies, flowing into their souls through the most precious blood-shedding and inestimable value and everlastingly efficacious sacrifice of the worthy Lamb—all which give us a grand display of the exceeding riches of grace. So saith the apostle, ‘But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)’” (Eph. 2:4-5).

“The Holy Spirit having, as the Spirit of life, quickened the elect with spiritual life in their souls, gives them to see, know, and understand the fountain from which all flows. He opens, explains, and applies with divine power to the mind, what Paul, speaking of himself and Timothy, hath declared, ‘Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began’” (2 Tim. 1:9).

“The Holy Spirit, agreeably to His office in the covenant of grace, is pleased to take of the things of Christ and to ‘shew’ or make them manifest. He leads poor awakened sinners to behold the Lamb of God, and in a sight of Him as set forth in the Word, and testified of by the Spirit therein, they see salvation. On which they cannot forbear individually breaking out, saying, ‘Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation’” (Isa. 12:2). Perceiving how exactly suited Christ is to them, and how exactly suited they are for Him to glorify Himself in their eternal redemption, they cannot but prize and esteem Him as the Author and Finisher of their salvation.

“This knowledge concerning Christ they receive from the everlasting Gospel, which is made effectual to them, as accompanied with the divine energy of His Spirit. In it they find Christ, and know that His love passeth knowledge, that His mercy endureth for ever, that His bloody sweat is their everlasting purification, His wounds and bruises received in the day of the Lord’s fierce anger, their everlasting healing, His soul travail, their peace, and His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, their everlasting righteousness and perfection. This gladdens their hearts, and fills their minds with peace, so that in believing the everlasting worth, virtue, and efficacy of His blood and righteousness, they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (S. E. Pierce, 1746-1829).

Before the Lord Jesus left His disciples, He declared, “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever” (John 14:16). That “Comforter” was henceforth to be the Teacher of God’s saints, giving to them the

Holy Scriptures, opening them to their understandings, applying them to their hearts, supplying all their spiritual need. Yet how little do God's people realize the exceeding preciousness of this gift! How faintly do they apprehend how much they owe, how deeply they are indebted, to the gracious operations of the third Person of the blessed Trinity! How rarely are their hearts engaged and their thoughts occupied with the divine "Comforter!" How scant is the honour, praise, and worship given Him!

The mission of the Spirit in the earth is to bring and apply to the souls of God's elect that great and glorious redemption which was wrought out and purchased for them by the incarnate Son. "Salvation is of the LORD" (Jonah 2:9), entirely so from the beginning to end. The Father purposed, planned, and provided it. The Son procured and secured it. The Spirit imparts it. Faith perceives, understands, and enjoys it. But faith is neither a faculty nor an act of the natural man. It is the result of "the operation of God" (Col. 2:12), namely, the inward, imperceptible, invincible workings of the Holy Spirit. Faith is one of the *senses* of the "new man." As the physical body has five senses—sight, hearing, etc.—so has the "new man" his senses. That new man which is "created" (Eph. 2:10) by the Spirit is "spirit" (John 3:6). The "new man" has *eyes* to see that which the natural man cannot (1 Cor. 2:14). He has *ears* to hear that which the unregenerate are totally deaf to (Psa. 58:4-5), and so on. But before there can be spiritual eyes and ears, there must be a "spiritual man" to see and hear.

A "new creature" (2 Cor. 5:17)—not the old one changed or renovated—has to be brought into existence. This is the product of the Spirit's creative work. He is here to give new and spiritual being to each of God's elect, who are, by natural birth, "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). This is the Holy Spirit's work *in salvation*. The Holy Spirit is as truly the Saviour of God's people as Christ is. It is written, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he *saved* us, *by* the washing of regeneration, and renewing of *the Holy Spirit*" (Tit. 3:5). And again, "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2 Thess. 2:13). As hell had been our eternal portion, but for the work of Christ, so heaven could

never be our dwelling-place, but for the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit not only shows the elect sinner his need *of* Christ, but “reveals” Him *in* him (Gal. 1:16). Christ is the “true light” (John 1:9), but the unregenerate love “darkness rather than light” (John 3:19). Therefore, they will never, of themselves, come to the light. No, the light has to be brought to them. As it is written, “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6).

It is not till the sinner has been brought “out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Pet. 2:9) that he comes to Christ. Comes to Him with his *mind* (Isa. 26:3), the spiritual “understanding” which has been “given” him (1 John 5:20). His spiritual “affections” being drawn out to Him (1 Pet. 1:22), comes to Him with his *will* (Phil. 2:13), the new man surrendering completely to His lordship. “Coming to Christ” is *not* an outward, but an inward act. It is not the act of the “natural man” (John 6:44), but of the new man (John 6:40)—“see” spiritually before “believe.” And this new and spiritual man is the product of the sovereign and supernatural operations of the Spirit, to which *we* contribute nothing, and in which *we* have no part whatever.

The instrument which the Holy Spirit employs, “the seed” which He uses, is the written Word of God. As long as the Word is only presented to us objectively, it makes no spiritual impression upon us. Not until the Holy Spirit implants *within* the soul, subjectively, does the Word *become to us* “quick and powerful” (Heb. 4:12). True, that Word is, in itself, the “Word of life” (Phil. 2:16), as the germ of life is in the living grain before it is sown in the ground. But it only *becomes* the “Word of life” *in* the individual when the Holy Spirit imparts it to the soul itself. When He does so, that individual enters into a “saving knowledge of the truth.” God’s great salvation is no longer a beautiful theory, but an experimental fact to the consciousness. Then it is that the Spirit takes of the things of Christ and *shows* them unto me—having previously given *eyes* to see. Then it is that, under the Spirit’s *application* of the Scriptures to my understanding and heart, I gradually discover more and more what a vile and totally depraved sinner I am in myself.

And then it is, and thus, I am brought to realize, by the Spirit, how well suited is Christ, the Saviour of *sinner*s, to me.

The “new man,” having been formed in the Christian, his new “senses” and faculties need training and developing, as our natural ones did when we were little children. For this, too, the Christian is entirely dependent upon the power and operations of the third Person of the Godhead. He is in constant need of being “strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man” (Eph. 3:16). For this he should pray indefinitely each day. In everything and for everything the Christian is absolutely dependent upon the Holy Spirit. In the remainder of this article, we shall consider some of the works of the blessed Comforter in the soul.

1. He sheds abroad God’s love in the heart

“The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us” (Rom. 5:5). The epistle to the Romans contains a full unfolding and exposition of the Gospel of God (Rom. 1:1). The verse we have quoted gives the first mention of the Spirit in it (except Rom. 1:4). Therefore, this is the logical place to start in our consideration of the Spirit’s work in the Christian. He it is who communicates to the heart of the elect sinner that wondrous love which has dwelt in the heart of God toward him from all eternity (Jer. 31:3). It is by the Spirit that a discovery is made to us of God’s love.

No sinner has any real sense of the eternal and redeeming love of God for himself till it is actually communicated by the Spirit. To the unregenerate, Christ said, “But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you” (John 5:42). In his unconverted state, the Christian dreaded God, feeling that He was *against* him. Yea, all men naturally hate God (Rom. 8:7). It is only when we see His love to us in Christ, by the Comforter, that we repent and love Him—“We love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). “The LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, *to love the LORD thy God*” (Deut. 30:6). “Though sinners should hear ten thousand times of the love of God in the gift of His Son, they are never properly affected by it, till the Holy Spirit enters their hearts, and till the love to Him is produced by the truth through

the Spirit” (Robert Haldane, 1764-1842)—see 1 Corinthians 2:10.

2. *He assures us that the Word is God’s*

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might *know* the things that are freely given to us of God” (1 Cor. 2:12). In verse 4, the apostle reminded the Corinthians that when he first preached to them, it was “not with enticing words of man’s wisdom”—vain philosophy—but “in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,” i.e. with a God-given message. And this was “that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God” (1 Cor. 2:5). That which Paul had preached was the “wisdom of God in a mystery,” i.e. a divine secret, but now disclosed, namely, “the hidden wisdom [counsels of grace], which God *ordained* before the world unto our glory” (1 Cor. 2:7). These counsels of grace, this electing love, which was to be accomplished through redemption, “none of the princes of this world knew” (1 Cor. 2:8). That the whole of this passage concerns the predestinating grace of God towards His elect is clear from, “God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (1 Cor. 2:10), i.e. He is thoroughly cognizant of and conversant with the secret counsels of the eternal Three in the everlasting covenant.

In 1 Corinthians 2:11, the apostle points out that the human spirit is only capable of understanding human things, so divine things are known only by the divine Spirit. And we Christians have received “not the spirit of the world,” i.e. a mere reasoning faculty, but “the Spirit which is of God,” the Comforter given to us, dwelling in us, and this that, “We might know the things that are freely given to us of God”—given to us now in the written Word for faith’s instruction and encouragement. It is the Holy Spirit who works in the soul of the Christian a firm persuasion, an unshakable assurance, that the Scriptures are the Word of God. It is not only through the testimony and authority of “the church” that he receives them as divine. Godly men may present convincing arguments for their inspiration, and those arguments may win an intellectual assent, but they neither search the conscience nor beget in the soul a spiritual faith in them. The same Spirit who moved holy men of old to write

them must work in the heart a consciousness that they are *God's* Word. It is by the Spirit that we are "established" in the faith (2 Cor. 1:21).

3. He directs our walk

This is the fulfilment of one of the many promises which God has given to His people, "And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them" (Ezek. 36:27). Even after God has imparted His Spirit to an elect soul, he has to be *caused* to "walk in God's statutes." As Jeremiah declared, "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). Looked at according to the flesh, the old man, the Christian is not only ignorant of those paths pleasing to God, but he is averse to them. Looked at according to the spirit, the new man, the Christian is but a "babe" in Christ and needs a Guide and Supporter. Of old, the Psalmist confessed, "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake" (Psa. 23:3). This is the acknowledgment of every true Christian.

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:14). This is the chief and distinguishing mark of a true Christian. He is *always* "led by the Spirit," for He never releases His hold of us. He leads first to Christ, then to the throne of grace, and then to practical godliness, ultimately to the glory. He "leads" by enlightening the desires of the new man, by inclining the will. It is the Spirit of God who keeps us in the narrow way, and delivers from the destructive snares of Satan.

4. He prompts all true obedience

Christians have no more vital godliness than what the Holy Spirit has wrought in them. Some who would assent to this bare statement would probably dissent did they pause to analyse it. We have no more faith than what the Holy Spirit has imparted to us, no more knowledge of God, no more hope or love, than what He has given. This is a very humbling confession to make, and proud flesh resents it. Yet the teaching of Holy Writ makes it unmistakably clear that the Author of all true godliness is the divine Comforter. "By the

grace of God I am what I am” (1 Cor. 15:10)—namely, by what the Spirit of God has imparted to me, wrought in me, produced through me, “Without the Lord I can do *nothing*” (John 15:5).

In the new nature, given at the new birth, there is a fitness and a readiness unto godly obedience, but *no power*. It has been well said, “We are not in this world intrusted with any spiritual ability from God, as without farther actual assistance and aid to do anything that is good” (Dr. John Owen, 1616-1683). Thus, the Christian stands in daily need and constant need of the Spirit’s gracious operations. “Our sufficiency is of God” (2 Cor. 3:5), and He works in us not only to will, but also to “*do* of his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). Therefore, we find the apostle praying that He would “make you perfect in every good work to do his will.” How? By “working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight” (Heb. 13:21). And thus do the godly own, “For thou also hast wrought all our works in us” (Isa. 26:12).

5. He produces all spiritual fruit

Of old, God said, “From *me* is thy fruit found” (Hosea 14:8). Spiritual fruit is neither produced by nor does it issue from the natural man. It is produced by the Holy Spirit, and issues from the new man, “Which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph. 4:24). All that God works in and through His people is by the Spirit. For the Philippians, Paul prayed that they might be “filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God” (Phil. 1:11)—inasmuch as the Holy Spirit is the Executive of the Godhead, *He* is to be understood as the producer, they are “by Jesus Christ” as their meritorious cause.

The leading passage on fruit-bearing is found in John 15:1-8. There the Lord Jesus, under the figure of a vine and its branches, teaches us that “fruit” is the consequent and outcome of “abiding” in Him, which is one of the New Testament terms for intimate communion. But communion with Christ is produced and sustained by the Holy Spirit, who is here to glorify Christ. Yet faith has to be in exercise. There must be definite dependence on the Spirit for this. The result of such communion and faith is “fruit,” i.e. “love, joy,

peace, long-suffering, gentleness, faith, meekness, temperance,” and in Galatians 5:22, these are expressly called, “the fruit of *the Spirit*.”

6. *He conforms us to Christ*

To this every believer has been predestinated (Rom. 8:29), and the decree of God is made good by the workings of His Spirit. Here again the only instrument which He uses is the written Word. He takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto the Christian (John 16:13, 15). That is, He opens to our understandings and hearts the glories of Him who is altogether lovely. He shines upon the sacred page so that in His light we see light (Psa. 36:9). As our thoughts are occupied with Christ, as our hearts are engaged with Him, the features of His likeness are stamped upon us. This is the meaning of 2 Corinthians 3:18, “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

7. *He inspires all true prayer*

A great deal of what passes for “prayer” today is nothing but the religiousness of the flesh. The Pharisees made long prayers, the Mohammedans and Papists do the same. Nor is Protestantism free from this plague. Again, much of our supposed praying is only the distress of the natural man finding utterance. The most ungodly will cry unto the Lord in moments of real peril and acute pain. But this is nothing better than the cries which animals make when in distress. Thus did God complain about Israel of old, “They have not cried unto me *with their heart*, when they *howled* upon their beds” (Hosea 7:14), which plainly intimates that they *had* “cried unto him” with the outward voice, yet was it a cry which was no more effectual than the “howling” of the wild beasts.

Of old, the disciples of the Lord besought Him, “Teach us *to pray*” (Luke 11:1). This needs to be our daily request, for of ourselves we know neither *how* to pray nor *what* to pray for. But thank God, the Spirit is given to Christians “to help their infirmities” (Rom. 8:26). This He does by granting them the “spirit of grace and supplication” (Zech. 12:10), by showing them from the Scriptures how to present their petitions so as to gain the ear of

God. This is “praying in the Holy Spirit” (Jude 1:20). The Spirit is both the inspirer and inditer of all prayer. But His aid must be sought, His guidance importuned.

8. *He preserves the Christian*

This He does by “renewing” him in the inner man “day by day” (2 Cor. 4:16), strengthening us with His might (Eph. 3:16 and compare with 3:20). It is by the Spirit that we are kept from soul-destroying error, and preserved from making shipwreck of the faith. We are “kept by the power of God through faith” (1 Pet. 1:5), that is by the effectual operations of His Spirit maintaining and sustaining our faith. Thus, it is by the Spirit that we are “*sealed* unto the day of redemption” (Eph. 4:30).

Ere closing this article, which makes no pretensions to having presented anything like a *complete* outline of this important subject, perhaps some of our readers will welcome a few lines on what is termed the “endowment of the Holy Spirit.” Many of God’s people have been sorely perplexed and harassed (Ezek. 13:22) by the deceptions of some who have asserted that Christians should seek from God a second work of grace, variously designated by them as the “baptism of the Spirit,” “filling of the Spirit,” etc. They have affirmed that the Holy Spirit is willing to come upon us in mighty power if we will fulfil the conditions specified by these men, some of whom have been looked up to as eminent Bible teachers, and who claim that *they* have been thus endued by the Spirit. We have met, personally, numbers of God’s people who have earnestly sought this blessing, who have done everything their teachers bade them do, only to find the desired “blessing” eludes them. Instead of blaming their teachers, they have blamed themselves. Instead of searching the Scriptures, they have sought to search their own hearts, with the result that some known to us have ended in mental homes, others in a suicides’ grave.

Of course, appeal is made by these men to the Word of God, yet it does not support their error. Let any exercised soul read carefully through the book of Acts, and he will not there find a single passage which tells of any of the apostles urging Christians to *seek* an endowment of the Spirit, still less are there any inspired directions as

to how such an enduement may be obtained. This of itself is quite sufficient to expose the unscripturalness of these troublers of the saints. Neither their method nor their message is apostolic. True, we do read in Acts of the *Apostles* being filled with the Spirit, speaking in tongues, working signs and wonders, but that was *before* the New Testament was written and completed. Those divine gifts were the authentication of their mission. But those abnormal gifts were withdrawn before the last of the apostles passed from this scene.

Again, in the New Testament, there are twenty-one epistles, and with one seeming exception (Eph. 5:18), none of them contains any exhortations for God's people to *seek* any further "anointing" or "enduement" other than what they already received when they were born again. Still less are there any rules and regulations laid down for the obtaining of any "second blessing." Nor need Ephesians 5:18 occasion the slightest difficulty. If verses 18 and 19 be read together, it is obvious that the simple meaning of this passage is, "Let not Christians find their joy and delight in carnal intoxicants (such as the worldlings do), but in spiritual enjoyments and employments." The definite article is not found here in the Greek, and "be filled with the Spirit" is interpreted for us in the parallel passage in Colossians 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly," etc.

The responsibility of the Christian is to recognize that he *is* indwelt by the Spirit (Rom. 8:9), that his body is "the temple of the Spirit" (1 Cor. 6:19). It is to seek help from God daily that he may be kept from "grieving" the Spirit (Eph. 4:30). It is to honour the Spirit by owning that *all* his springs are in Him, that He is the Author and Producer of all spiritual fruit in him. It is to render prayer, praise and worship to the Spirit, equally as to the Father and the Son. May the Lord the Spirit graciously add His blessing to what has been written, and cause the reader to "prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21).

