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TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT 71
by Dr. Kimon Nicolaides

PNEUMATOLOGY AND THE CHRISTIAN TRINITY .. 109
by Dr. Bob Hughes

**A HISTORICAL ARGUMENT FOR THE RESURRECTION
OF JESUS CHRIST 117**
by Rev. David Richards

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND HIS MINISTRIES 135
by Rev. Jefferson Vann

ANGELS AND DEMONS..... 158
(Looking ahead to issue XLIII/1)
by Rev. Jefferson Vann

THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT in The Proclamation Of The Word: His Empowerment And Illumination¹

By Dr. Kimon Nicolaidis, PhD

In the previous chapter, this writer discussed some conditions that should lead a student of preaching to be concerned about having the fullness of the Holy Spirit for the empowerment and illumination essential to the ministry of proclamation.² This chapter will examine some Scripture passages and key words on the fullness of the Spirit, explain why that state is essential to the illumination of the Holy Spirit so necessary to the exegete, and offer some suggestions for the preacher in that regard.

Fullness of the Spirit

First it is necessary to assess briefly some key New Testament words and passages that are used to justify the classical Pentecostal position of subsequence, that is, a work of grace beyond conversion for which the expression “baptism of the Holy Spirit” has been applied. Three authors of special concern are Luke, John and Paul. The primary contention here is based on Jesus’ command in Luke 24:49: “And behold, I am sending (ἀποστέλλω) the promise (ἐπαγγελίαν) of my Father upon you (ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς). But stay in the city until you are clothed (ἐνδύσησθε) with power (δύναμιν) from on high.”³

Luke 3:16 is helpful in clarifying what Jesus refers to:

John answered them all, saying, “I baptize (βαπτίζω) you with water, but he who is mightier (ισχυρότερός) than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to

¹ This article is excerpted from a chapter of an unpublished dissertation of the author for a DMin in homiletics at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in 2009.

² In essence, in order to be a “burning and shining light” (John 5:35), both aspects are necessary: the power and the illumination. Both aspects will be dealt with respectively in this chapter.

³ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*.

untie. He will baptize (βαπτίσει) you with the Holy Spirit (πνεύματιγιω) and with fire (πυρι).

All the Gospel accounts record John's pronouncement that Jesus would be the one to baptize with the Holy Spirit.⁴ The fulfillment of that pronouncement is recorded in Acts 2:1–4:

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled (ἐπλήρωσεν) the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues (γλώσσαι) as of fire (πυρός) appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled (ἐπλήσθησαν) with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues (γλώσσαις) as the Spirit (πνεῦμα) gave them utterance.

It is claimed that the two major events of the New Testament, the incarnation of Christ and the charismatic endowment of the Spirit at Pentecost, bring to at least a proleptic fulfillment all the major prophesies and promises of the Old Testament, and with them a closure to that era, inaugurating the eschaton.⁵ As such, both these events are seen to be equally paramount in the *heilsgeschichte*.⁶

⁴ See also Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; John 1:26.

⁵ E.g., George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 333–34, sees the arrival of the Spirit in power as tantamount to God's kingdom reign beginning on earth as a proleptic fulfillment of what is yet to come. Also see Frederick D. Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 156, where the coming of the Spirit is described as the penultimate event of salvation history prior to Christ's return; or Sinclair Fergusson, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1996), 91, who writes that this is a once for all, unrepeatable event in God's redemptive-historical plan yet with a personal-existential appropriation; see also James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (London: SCM, 1970), 44, C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 26; Eduard Schweizer, *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology*, ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 503–4.

⁶ See Eduard Schweizer *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, (London: A & C Black, 1952), 6:412; for *historia salutis*, see Richard B. Gaffin, *Perspectives on Pentecost* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1984), 22.

More debatable is the claim that since Pentecost, a new step, which may not be essential for salvation, is added to the *ordo salutis*.

To the traditional Protestant list, which includes one's calling, conversion, repentance, regeneration, sanctification and adoption, "the baptism of the Holy Spirit" is said to be appended.⁷ In this view, obtaining the fullness of the Spirit in the New Testament would be contingent upon having first been baptized by the Spirit. It is argued, therefore, that this baptism is a distinct work of the Holy Spirit and separate from that of regeneration or indwelling. While it is considered essential to the ministry of proclamation, such a baptism does not necessarily occur automatically at the time of salvation or water baptism and therefore is not necessary for salvation. The preacher, however, is required to continually seek after it diligently.

That this position appears suspect is evident from Acts 2:38. There, after explaining the meaning of the outpouring of the Spirit that occurred at Pentecost, Peter encouraged the attending crowd to repent and be baptized, so as to receive (λήμψεσθε) the gift of the Holy Spirit, indicating his availability to them at that time. From this it would appear that since Pentecost, the presence of the Holy Spirit in the church ensures that the conversion of any new believer is to be accompanied by the immediate infusion of this gift of the Holy Spirit. Sacramentalists find in this text, along with those on the baptism of Jesus, grounds to claim that such an infusion occurs at water baptism or confirmation.⁸ To conclude entirely from this

⁷ The order depends upon one's theological stance, but that such elements have abundant scriptural attestation is generally conceded.

⁸ The liturgical or sacramentalist position is that water baptism or confirmation as such may be a defining means of grace or the means by which the Holy Spirit is imparted. For this view, see Oliver C. Quick, *The Christian Sacraments* (London: Nisbet, 1932), 184; Herbert G. Marsh, *Origin and Significance of New Testament Baptism* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilm, 1977), 194; Richard Baxter, *The Practical Works of Richard Baxter*, ed. William Orme, (London: Duncan, 1830) 14:401ff.; G. W. H. Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit: A Study of the Doctrine of Baptism and Confirmation in the New Testament and Fathers* (London: S.P.C.K, 1967), 33, 66; Oscar Cullman, *Baptism in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1950), 10; Otto Kuss, *Auslegung und Verkündigung* (Regensburg: Pustet 1960), 104-5; J. G. Davies, *The Spirit, the Church, and the Sacraments* (London, Faith Press 1954), 104; Rudolph Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1958), 138; G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (London: Macmillan, 1963), 112; Ernest Haenchen, *Der Weg Jesu* (Berlin: Topelmann, 1966), 498-99; Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of Luke* (New York: Harper, 1961), 100; Alfred Wikenhauser, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1967), 54.

passage that such an infusion is always assured at that time may go beyond what the text explicitly states and thus make an inference presumptive of the nature and freedom of God.

To buttress the position of baptism at conversion, therefore, an appeal is made to Paul's usage of the term "baptism," and 1 Corinthians 12:13 provides further corroboration: "For in one Spirit (ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι) we were all (πάντες) baptized (ἐβαπτίσθημεν) into one body (εἰς ἓν σῶμα) — Jews or Greeks, slaves or free — and all (πάντες) were made to drink (ἐποτίσθημεν) of one Spirit (ἐν πνεύμα)." The universal nature of this spiritual baptism for Christians makes it very difficult to reconcile with the view that it could be referring to a post regenerative experience.

If doubt remains that Spirit baptism is the automatic birth-right poured out on every Christian at the moment of conversion, then consideration is directed to Galatians 3:27: "For as many of you (ὅσοι) as were baptized (ἐβαπτίσθητε) into Christ (εἰς Χριστόν) have put on (ἐνεδύσασθε) Christ." Although Paul may mean water baptism, here the preposition (εἰς) carries inferences going beyond mere outward ritual, and the verb (ἐνεδύσασθε) has implicit associations as well. It was the same form Jesus employed in referring to the Spirit baptism (Acts 2). It was also used to describe how Gideon or Amasai in the Old Testament was filled with the Spirit.⁹ There seems thus to be a link with the Pentecostal outpouring in light of Acts 2:38.

Another nail to the coffin on the Pentecostal position may be applied with Ephesians 4:5: "One Lord, one faith, one baptism." In light of this text, one may ask why, if a post conversion experience of being baptized in the Spirit is essential to being empowered for witness and living the Christian life, Paul, who was concerned with the daily pressures of all the churches, never encouraged any of them to ensure that their new converts obtained this Spirit baptism. The argument from silence is difficult to accept in view of the emphasis placed upon such a baptism in these Spirit-minded churches. Their popularity and apparent success in fulfilling the Great Commission, however, warrants a closer examination of the exegesis they offer in defense of their position.

⁹ See Judges 6:34; 1 Chronicles 12:18

The universality of the gift of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12:13 is what most traditional commentators rely upon to conclude that post-Pentecost Christians need not concern themselves about a distinct or subsequent baptism of the Spirit.¹⁰ This verse, therefore, has been the target at which most Pentecostals would like to take aim.

One problem raised with the assumption is that the word “baptize” or “baptism” is not used in the English language other than as it has been adopted from its ceremonial use in the New Testament. Contemporary use of the word, therefore, always carries with it the ritualistic connotations associated with baptism, that is, the sacrament instituted by Christ wherein a new convert is publically initiated into the church.¹¹ In Koine Greek, however, the word βαπτίζω carried more than merely ceremonial connotations. It was a commonly used word with several related meanings such as dipping hot iron into water to temper it, dyeing wool in colored liquid, sinking a ship in the ocean, or even dipping a ladle into broth so as to draw some out. The word normally implied repeated dippings, as opposed to βαπτω, which meant to dip or immerse once.¹²

Of special interest is that in addition to these mechanical or ceremonial meanings, βαπτίζω also could carry a metaphorical meaning (a meaning in which an analogy is made with one of its other meanings). Our Lord used such a meaning when he referred to the baptism he had yet to undergo (Mark 10:38); that is, he was to be plunged into his sufferings and then rise up from them. The metaphorical use, however, found to be most predominant in Koine Greek was “to introduce or place a person or thing into a new environment or into union with something else so as to alter its condition or its relationship to its previous environment.”¹³

This, it would appear, is precisely the meaning Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 12:13, where the context shows that he is specifi-

¹⁰ John R. W. Stott, *The Baptism and Fullness of the Spirit* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1964), 38-39; Gaffin, *Perspectives on Pentecost*, 28-29; Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 127ff.

¹¹ See Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 5ff.; Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994), 179.

¹² Kenneth S. Wuest, *Studies in the Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1945), 70ff.; contra Isaac Taylor, *A History of Baptism*, Rev. John H. Hinton (London: Paternoster, 1864), 4-5.

¹³ Wuest, *Studies in Vocabulary*, 72.

cally referring to the union that the believer has with Christ and thus with his body. This baptism is where the Holy Spirit places the believer into a new environment of freedom in Christ, having removed him from his old environment of slavery to sin.¹⁴

Other clues appear to indicate that Paul's use of this term may diverge from that found in the Gospels or Acts. Of the seven passages in Scriptures that have the phrase "baptism in the Holy Spirit," only 1 Corinthians 12:13 inserts ἐν into the phrase. Only this passage either does not or could not include καὶ κυρί without violating its meaning. Only this passage fails to include the designator ἄνω to modify "Spirit." And only in this passage does the Spirit appear to be the agent who does the baptizing.¹⁵ In all the others, Jesus is

¹⁴ Paul also uses this sense in Romans 6:3, 4.

¹⁵ This point is debatable. Commentators arguing for the instrumental use of the dative with ἐν include James Moffat, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938), 186; Cullman, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 30; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Baptism in the Thought of St. Paul* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1964), 27-29; Howard M. Ervin, *Conversion-Initiation and the Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1984), 99; Harold Hunter, "Spirit Baptism" (Ph.D. thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1979), 44, W. A. Criswell, *Baptism, Filling, and Gifts of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 8, Harry A. A. Kennedy, *St. Paul and the Mystery Religions* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1913), 239-40; H. Oepke, ἐν with → πνεῦμα TDNT, 2:540-541; Lucien Cerfaux, *The Christian in the Theology of Paul* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), 302; John Baker, *Baptized in One Spirit: The Meaning of 1 Corinthians 12:13* (London: Fountain Trust, 1967), 7-8; Michael Harper, *The Baptism of Fire* (Plainfield, N.J.: Logos, 1970), 8. In this view, the Spirit is the agent, as is reflected by the translations in the NIV, RSV, TEV, Darby, KJV, GNB, ISV, NASB, NCV ("through one Spirit"), NKJV, NLT, and The New Expanded Translation NT. Those preferring a locative understanding include Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 181; Anthony A. Hoekema, *Holy Spirit Baptism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 22; Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 128; A. T. Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1914), 272; Hans Lietzmann and Werner G. Kummel, *An die Korinther I-II*, in *Handbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1949), 63; Jean Hering, *The First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (London: Epworth, 1962), 129; Gerhard Dellling, *Die Taufe im Neuen Testament* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1963), 119; Werner Bieder, *Die Verheisung die Taufe im Neuen Testament* (Zürich: EVZ-Verlag 1966), 120; C. K. Barrett, *The Holy Spirit in the Gospel Tradition* (London: S.P.C.K., 1966), 288; NEB, JB, NRSV, YF, ESV, Vulgate, ASV. Gaffin, *Perspectives on Pentecost*, 29, also argues cogently against the instrumental sense.

the baptizer. The context of all the other passages is clearly the day of Pentecost. The context of Paul's passage is the body of Christ. The use of εἰς ἐνσώμα clearly shows he is referring to entrance into the body of Christ, which is clearly not what any of the other passages have in mind. The other passages appear to refer specifically to a charismatic endowment or empowerment.

In addition, the Pauline passage is the only one that is epistolary. A fact peculiar to epistolary texts is their occasional nature. Their interpretation, therefore, is crucially dependent upon the specific circumstances being addressed, and in Corinth that circumstance was the unity of the body.¹⁶

This is not to say that Paul was unaware of the meaning employed by Luke, Matthew or John, but he chose to use a different meaning to address a different situation, as he had done with any number of other words. Consider, for example, his use of the term σὰρξ, which he had used with as many as four different meanings.¹⁷ So, in Ephesians Paul can affirm the unity of Christ's body in that there is only one baptism by which its members are grafted into the church. That is not to say that all its members have of necessity been filled with (baptized in) the Holy Spirit.

Another problem with the traditionalist viewpoint is that in the book of Acts there are at least three other cases in which post-Pentecost Christians had yet to receive Spirit baptism (Acts 8:12–17; 9:18; 19:1–7), not to mention innumerable cases, allegedly, since.¹⁸ To say that historical narratives must be subject to the test of intent before they are of value in a didactic sense is fine if such intent is evidently other than what one discerns to be a precedent.¹⁹ In the

¹⁶ Or its diversity, depending upon which commentator one agrees with; e.g., see Fee, *Empowering Presence*.

¹⁷ Hunter, "Spirit Baptism," 44; consider Rom. 1:3, ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ κατὰ σάρκα (**human nature or ancestry**); Rom 2:28, ἔστιν οὐδὲ ἡ ἐν τῷ φανερωῖ ἐν σαρκί (physical) περιτομή; Rom. 3:20, διότι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιωθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ (humanity); or Rom. 7:5, σαρκί (**sinful or carnal nature**).

¹⁸ See Joel Robbins, *Becoming Sinners* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 125ff., for the perspective from a secular anthropologist; for a more comprehensive list, see Hunter, "Spirit Baptism," 34ff.

¹⁹ Gordon D. Fee, "A Major Problem with Pentecostal Hermeneutics," in *Perspectives on the New Pentecostalism*, ed. Russell P. Spittler (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976), 125-26.

case of Luke's work, however, the intent is not always obvious, and when a pattern continues to be repeated, it is difficult not to see some didactic value.

Before concluding that Paul can be accommodated to allow for the classic Pentecostal interpretation of the Lukan passages, however, there are further points to consider. Paul's use of the word "baptism" is to be found only in its technical sense (i.e., referring to the initiation ritual of water baptism (see 1 Cor. 1:13-17), or in its metaphorical sense, as one more of the numerous metaphors he applies to help explain what happens in the process or event of being incorporated into the body of Christ (i.e., of being born again, being sealed, converted or adopted).

When he uses the metaphor of putting on Christ, Paul equates that with the process of walking according to the light, that is, of obeying the light that now dwells within. The first step in that process is water baptism. That is what he means in Galatians 3:27, and that is why he uses the phrase "to put on (ἐνεδύσασθε) Christ." This is also why he associates water baptism with the second person of the Trinity. Consequently, when he is making a creedal affirmation about the triune nature of God, as he is in Ephesians 4:4-6, such an association may be included to reinforce his point. The reference to one baptism in Ephesians 4:5 is, therefore, used in the technical sense.

While many commentators may accept the instrumental sense of the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12:13a, such an interpretation is not to be found in any of the other scriptural occurrences of the phrase associating baptism with **ἐνπνεύματι**.²⁰ The almost certain conclusion that Paul refers to the common experience of conversion in 1 Corinthians 12:13a and its parallel reference in the latter part of the verse (1 Cor. 12:13b, to their being made to drink of the Spirit) ties that experience back to the historical event of Pentecost, thus equating the two experiences.²¹ Ultimately, despite careful consideration, this author tentatively concludes that Paul's meaning

²⁰ The six other uses found in Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16; Mark 1:8; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16.

²¹ Dunn argues that this term (most commonly translated "to drink") is also translated "having poured out upon" in numerous Old Testament texts (e.g., Isa 29:10); see *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 18.

does not support the position separating the timing of the gift of the Holy Spirit in any sense.

In any case, whether or not one believes it is possible for a Christian never to have been baptized in the Holy Spirit today, it would be difficult to deny that it is possible for Christians to lack the fullness of the Spirit even if such fullness was once evident in their lives. One primary reason for being baptized in the Holy Spirit is not only to be indwelt by the Spirit (John 7:39). If that were the case, then there would have been no need for Jesus to ask his disciples to tarry until Pentecost when he had already infused them, in that sense, with the Spirit (John 20:22).²² A primary reason for the Spirit baptism, or the fullness of the Spirit, is for charismatic endowment empowering the Christian for works of ministry.

Since the English language does not have a word that corresponds appropriately or adequately to the Greek word βαπτίζω, to avoid confusion it is suggested that the phrase “baptism in the Spirit” be replaced with “fullness of the Spirit.”²³ These phrases are used synonymously in Scripture, so there should not be a problem with using either phrase as long as it is understood that this is something that is available to every believer. Whether they are called to preach the gospel or not, it should be sought, but if they are called to preach, they dare not do so without it.

Further evidence on this point can be found by showing the charismatic implications of a few more verses and key words related to this event. Consider 1 Thessalonians 1:5a: “for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power (δυνάμει) and in the Holy Spirit (ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ) and with full conviction ([ἐν] πληροφορία πολλῇ).”²⁴

²² See *ibid.*, 194. While this event cannot be considered normative or in any way repeatable for post-Pentecost Christians, it reinforces this point.

²³ Stott, *Baptism and Fullness*, 30; Hoekema, *Holy Spirit Baptism*; L. S. Chafer, *He That Is Spiritual* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967); Rene Pache, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1954); James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and Spirit* (London: SCM, 1975); Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*.

²⁴ The ἐν preceding “full assurance,” although it is included in brackets, is likely a later addition, since its earlier omission (with ⚭, B, 33, r, lat), would otherwise be inexplicable. This means that “full assurance” will join with “Spirit” in a hendiadys.

Many commentators equate δυνάμει here with the power of the gospel (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:18).²⁵ Harold Hunter argues that such a position fails to appreciate the qualification of ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ.²⁶ Also, Paul frequently combines *pneuma* with *dunamis* (e.g., 1 Cor. 15:43ff.; Rom. 1:3-4) as a hendiadys. Here, however, Hunter finds that a distinction is drawn in which *pneuma* applies to the spoken word, while the power (being plural here and including an additional ἐν) implies that some miracles also occurred (see, e.g., Rom. 15:18ff.; 1 Cor. 2:4; 4:19-20; 5:4; 12:10; Gal. 3:5; 1 Cor. 2:6-16).²⁷ G. W. H. Lampe writes, "It is the same concept employed by Luke where the Spirit works as a dynamic force to inspire the apostles, and attest the gospel through a demonstration of power (see also Rom. 15:19; 1 Cor. 2:4; 1 Thessalonians 1:5; 1 Cor. 2:10; 13f; 1 Thess. 5:19; Ephesians 5:18)."²⁸ And from George Montague comes this assessment: "It is the charismatic Spirit promised to accompany apostolic preaching (Acts 1:8) by signs of healing, deliverance, miracles, and produce utter conviction in their preaching."²⁹

²⁵ Leon L. Morris, *First and Second Thessalonians*, NIC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 57; E. Edmong, *A Commentary on the Thessalonian Epistles* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 54.

²⁶ Hunter, "Spirit Baptism," 28.

²⁷ See also E. Earle Ellis, "Christ and Spirit in First Corinthians," in *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament*, ed. Barnabas Lindars and Stephen S. Smalley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 270-71; George Montague, *The Spirit: Growth of the Biblical Tradition* (New York: Paulist Press, 1976), 127, 132-33; J. Terrence Forestell, *Letters to the Thessalonians* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentiss Hall, 1990), 229; A. M. Hunter, *Paul and His Predecessors* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), 93; Charles H. Giblin, *A Threat to Faith: An Exegetical and Theological Reexamination of 2 Thessalonians 2* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1967), 45; I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 53-54; Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistle to the Thessalonians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 79; W. Grundman, "The Concept of Power in the New Testament," in Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. G. W. Bromiley, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 2:311.

²⁸ G. W. H. Lampe, *The Holy Spirit* (Fairacres, Oxford: SLG Press, 1974), 2:638.

²⁹ Montague, *Spirit*, 127. See also Edmond J. Dobbin, "Towards a Theology of the Spirit," *Heythrop Journal* 17 (June 1976): 14.

Much more likely than either of these positions is that Paul is referring to the power evident in the gripping and compelling conviction of truth that accompanied his preaching. And even more compelling evidence is the testimony of faith standing in the face of persecution arising from it. The main message here is that the word of God apart from the Spirit's accompanying power cannot bring life. A secondary note to preachers is that while Paul must have evidenced the Spirit's fullness in his preaching to the Thessalonians, the assurance of that fullness was not experienced by him at the time. This is clear from Paul's testimony and from his expression "this gospel came to you."³⁰

Further argument may be deduced from 1 Thess. 4:8, which says, "So, he who rejects *this* is not rejecting man but the God who gives (διδόντα) his Holy Spirit (τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ τὸ ἅγιον) to you." Again, although the present indicative participle διδόντα would normally indicate this to be a continuous or ongoing repetitive action, many commentators are unwilling to accept it at face value only because of a presupposed notion that the Spirit is given as a once-for-all action at conversion.³¹ Whether for charismatic purposes or for sanctification, the demands of the Christian life would imply the necessity for such continual appropriation. This is evident not only here but also in Romans 5:5 and John 3:34; 4:14; 7:37ff. Another corroborating passage is Galatians 3:2b, 3, 5, and 14b: did you receive (ἐλάβετε) the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? ... Having begun (ἐναρξάμενοι) by the Spirit, are you now being perfected (ἐπιτελεισθε) by the flesh? So then, does He who

³⁰ See Fee, *Empowering Presence*, 44. The idiom ἐγενήθη εἰς ὑμᾶς means to come to someone.

³¹ See, e.g., Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 105, 171; Leon L. Morris, *The Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester, England : Inter-Varsity Press, 1984), 128; William Niel, *The Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1950), 84; Ernest Best, *A Commentary on the First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972.), 169; James Moffat, *First and Second Thessalonians*, Moffat New Testament Commentaries (London: Hodder & Stoughton, n.d.), Expositor's Greek Text, 4:36; D. Edmund Hiebert, *A Commentary on the Thessalonian Epistles* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1976); Beda Rigaux, *Saint Paul: Les Epitres aux Thessaloniens* (Paris: J. Duculot, 1956), 514.

provides (ἐπιχορηγῶν) you with the Spirit (πνεῦμα) and works (ἐνεργῶν) miracles (δυνάμεις) among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? ... so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit (ἐπαγγελίαν τοῦ πνεύματος) through faith.

The aorists ἐλάβετε and ἐναρξάμενοι indicate an event taking place in the past (i.e., at their conversion).³² The primary focus here, however, is on the charismatic work of the Spirit, as indicated by ἐπιχορηγῶν, ἐνεργῶν and δυνάμεις. The use of present participles implies a continuous, ongoing action since then. Some commentators would even find thereby an inference connecting these verses with Ephesians 5:18.³³ Paul frequently uses ἐπιχορηγῶν together with ἐνεργῶν when referring to the infinite “supply” of spiritual power so necessary for accomplishing God’s work (e.g., see Philip-
pians 1:19; Eph. 4:16; 2 Cor. 2:19; 9:10). That the noun cognates of ἐνεργῶν refer specifically to the outworking of the Spirit’s charismatic endowment is clear from 1 Cor. 12:6, 10 (with ἐνέργημι) or Phil. 3:21, Eph. 3:7, and Colossians 1:29 (with ἐνέργεια). The other key word mentioned here (δυνάμεις) is found so frequently in Luke or Acts to be indicative of these charismatic activities that only a sampling of verses will suffice to make the point (e.g., Luke 1:17; 5:17; 6:19; 8:46; 10:13, 19; 19:37; 24:49; Acts 1:8; 2:22; 4:33; 6:8; 8:13; 10:38; 19:11). That Paul calls this, in Galatians 3:14, the promise of the Spirit ties this back to the outpouring at Pentecost that Peter explained as being the fulfillment of the promise that God made to Abraham and that Jesus called the promise of the Father (Acts 1:4; 2:33). The point of this passage emphasizes the continual, ongoing need to be thirsting for, and drinking from, this well or source of power that only the gift of the Holy Spirit can supply (i.e., the charismatic endowment enabling one’s ministry to bear fruit). Its means of attainment is through faith alone.

³² John R.W. Stott, *A Message to the Galatians*, Only One Way (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1986), 31; Frederick Rendall, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, Expositor’s Greek Text (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1900), 3:167.

³³ Hunter, “Spirit Baptism,” 34.

Another substantiating verse is Gal. 4:6: “Because (ὅτι) you are sons, God has sent forth (ἐξαπέστειλεν) the Spirit (τὸ πνεῦμα) of His Son into our hearts, crying, (κρᾶζον) ‘Abba! Father!’” Here, the aorist (ἐξαπέστειλεν), used in the same sentence with the present indicative participle (κρᾶζον), describes an event preceding in time the action described by the participle. Many commentators use this verse to support the contention that there is a designated and distinct sequence in the framework Paul presents of God’s plan (the *ordo salutis*):³⁴ God first “sent” his Son in the fullness of time (v. 4), which is followed by the “sending forth” of his Spirit (v. 5). Each account uses the same word (ἐξαπέστειλεν) that Jesus employed in Luke 24:49. Then there is the logical sequence implied by the use of ὅτι (“because”): that being sons of God must precede the sending of the Spirit.

Such a focus, however, misses the point of what Paul is trying to say here: that the true mark of the Christian is the indwelling Spirit. The presence of the Spirit within the believer’s heart provides all the evidence needed of his sonship. Its objective historical reality is logically consequential and subsequent to the objective historic reality of Christ’s redeeming work. That having been done prior to a person’s conversion, however, means that there is no need for any more delay in the reception of the promised gift, and so no further sequence is meant to be envisioned here by Paul in that event. Of note in this verse is that a most fundamental aspect of the charismatic work of the Spirit is the ongoing intercession that the Spirit makes through the faithful and in their behalf that the participle (κρᾶζον) so aptly depicts (see, e.g., Matt. 9:27; Acts 14:14; Rom. 8:5–17, 26; 9:27; John 7:28, 37; Psalm 3:4 or [Ps. 3:5;

³⁴ Ibid., 33ff.; see also Heinrich Schlier, *Der Brief an die Galater* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), 197-98; Franz Mussner, *Der Galaterbrief* (Freiburg: Herder, 1974), 275; J. K. Parrett, “The Witness of the Holy Spirit; Calvin; The Puritans; and St. Paul,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 41 (1969): 165; L. S. Thornton, *Confirmation* (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1954), 11-12; Ervin, *Conversion-Initiation*, 86-88.

107:13]).³⁵ That which is so anticipated as to be considered necessary, therefore, for the maintenance of the condition of the “fullness of Spirit” stressed here is the ongoing intercession that should characterize the minister’s life (see Eph. 6:18).

The next passage of interest is Phil. 1:19: “Yes, and I will rejoice, for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance (σωτηρίαν) through your prayers and the provision (ἐπιχορηγίας) of the Spirit (τοῦ πνεύματος) of Jesus Christ.” In view of the association with the cognates of ἐπιχορηγίας with Spirit (as was the case with Gal. 3:5 and other texts), it is possible to assume that the Spirit, being here the object of the provision, is once again that charismatic endowment of which there is an expressed need for an ongoing supply.³⁶ This reading accords well with the metaphors employed by Christ in John 7:37–39. It also indicates that once again prayer is essential for its maintenance and in this instance implies the need of both the minister and his congregation as well.

Phil. 4:13 says, “I can do (ἰσχύω) all things through Him who strengthens (ἐνδυναμοῦντι) me.” The charismatic implications of this verse stem first from the associations of the verb (ἰσχύω) (present indicative, “I am strengthened”). Apart from having a noun cognate (ἰσχύς) that is an attribute of God (Revelation 5:12), it is used in Scripture to describe the power that may be attributed to

³⁵ Supported by Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 113; Thornton, *Confirmation*, 11-12; Ernest D. Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (New York: Scribner’s Sons, 1920), 221-22; Stanley M. Horton, *What the Bible Says about the Holy Spirit* (Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, 1976), 173; Herman Ridderbos, *The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 157; contra Bruner, *Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 268; Hoekema, *Spirit Baptism*, 81; Donald Guthrie, *Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 120; J. B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957), 169; R. A. Cole, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 116.

³⁶ Those supporting this view are E. F. Scott, *Philippians*, Interpreter’s Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1952), 11:34; Marvin R. Vincent, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians and Philemon* (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1897), 24; Jac Muller, *The Epistles of Paul to the Philippians and Philemon* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans 1955), 58; J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1953), 91; A. B. Simpson, *The Holy Spirit*, (Harrisburg, Penn.: Christian Publications, 1896), 2:158.

God's word (e.g., Acts 19:20). Its adjectival cognate (ἰσχυρότερος) can also have the same meaning (2 Cor. 10:10) and was used by John the Baptist to describe Christ's ministry relative to his own (Matt. 3:11), while noting Christ's baptism to be with the Holy Spirit and fire. Jesus also used this term to describe his works relative to those of Satan (Luke 11:21–22). When combined with the present indicative participle ἐνδυναμοῦντί, describing the means of this empowerment, there is an ongoing reliance as well as an implied progressive nature to the charismatic endowment that is stressed (e.g., see Eph. 6:10; 1 Timothy 1:12; 2 Tim. 4:17; Col. 1:29; Acts 9:22; Rom. 4:20). Some commentators see in this verse a reflection of Paul's frequent joining of two other key words (ἐνεργῶν and δυνάμεις) so as to remove any doubts as to whether it is the charismatic Spirit that is in view.³⁷ The nature of the task of proclamation should inspire the preacher to frequently look to this verse as a promise of no small import.

A crucial verse for this thesis is 1 Cor. 2:4: "My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration (ἀποδείξει) of the Spirit (ἐν πνεύματος) and power (δυνάμει)." The argument Paul is making must be considered in light of the problem he is addressing before one can understand the meaning he assigns to the hendiadys here (πνεύματος) and (δυνάμει). His choice of ἀποδείξει means more than merely manifestation. It carries the implication of combining a series of irrefutable premises in such a way as to deliver an overwhelmingly compelling conclusion to an argument.³⁸ It is meant to add an ironic twist to the problem of being enamored with articulate eloquence that has apparently consumed the Corinthians. For this hendiadys to refer to an external display of miraculous power, however, may serve only to divert one potential source of pride, the display of human wisdom, to another, the ability to perform miracles. Therefore, as opposed to many,³⁹ it is proposed that the type of miraculous

³⁷ Hunter, "Spirit Baptism," 39.

³⁸ As per Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 92n.

³⁹ G. G. Findley, *St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Expositor's Greek Text (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1900), 2:776; Charles Hodge, *An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 32; Paul W. Marsh, *First Corinthians, A New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969), 378.

power Paul had in mind here was more in keeping with whatever inside knowledge the Spirit may have made available to Paul in order that his preaching would be most effective in convicting them of their sins, as with Christ and the Samaritan women (John 4:7–42). Similar experiences are frequently encountered in preaching the Word. The Spirit directs the choice of certain texts that speak directly to the needs of an audience without the preacher even being aware of what those needs were.⁴⁰ The convicting power of the Word is effective only inasmuch as the omniscient Spirit brings its application to bear on the consciences of those hearing by exposing their sins in the light of its standards (e.g., 1 Cor. 14:24–25). Other Pauline passages that may bear upon the issue of the minister’s need for the ongoing charismatic endowment supplied by the Spirit and for which “the fullness of the Spirit” is such a crucial prerequisite would include 2 Cor. 1:12; 12:9; 2 Tim. 1:6–7; and Titus 3:5–6.

The passages in Ephesians, including the pivotal text of 5:18 that bear upon this topic, require a close look at this entire epistle. The significance of this epistle, in part, may be inferred from the time and location from which it was written as well as its original

⁴⁰ Space prohibits more than two brief personal examples. As a chaplain filling in for the Ancom Hospital chaplain in Panama, the writer was called to the emergency room to minister to a young girl who was scheduled to be sent home to the States. She was acting erratically and would wander out of the hospital in her pajamas unless she was given intensive over sight. He prayed with her and felt led to read Psalm 37. Unbeknownst to the writer, she had been raped and her life threatened by a man in the region to which she was being sent. At another time, the writer was called to preach at a church for the first time with a congregation that he had never met. He felt led to preach on Psalm 23, thinking perhaps that they were in need of a pastor. Later he discovered that a relatively large family in that church had buried a family member that week.

implied audience and author.⁴¹ It was one of Paul's last written documents (about A.D. 62), likely composed while under house arrest in Rome or Caesarea. It was written to the church at which Paul had spent the longest tenure of any during his missionary career. Paul had not visited Ephesus until his last missionary journey, by which time he had accumulated considerable firsthand experience in the nature of the spiritual warfare about which he was writing. It was also the home

⁴¹ Although there is some dispute as to the authorship of Ephesians (see Mark Harding, "Disputed and Undisputed Letters of Paul," in *The Pauline Canon*, ed. Stanley E. Porter, Pauline Studies 1 [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2004], 156-58), most scholars agree that it is thoroughly Pauline in doctrine (see Jean-Noel Aletti, "Les difficultes ecclesiologicalue de la letter aux Ephesiens: De Quelques Suggestions," *Biblica* 85 (2004): 457-74). The implied author is the apostle Paul (Eph. 1:1; 3:1). This writer assumes the integrity of Scriptures, a view that stems from one implication of their being inspired (2 Pet. 1:21; 1 Tim. 3:16). That such a presuppositional stance is necessary to experience the fullness of the indwelling Spirit is also a claim that will be made in this thesis.

In any case, that there is no need for those more skeptical to suspect anyone other than Paul was its human author has substantial support (see Terry L. Wilder, *Pseudonymity, the New Testament, and Deception: An Inquiry into Intention and Reception* [Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2004], 265, or Ben Witherington, *Letters and Homilies from Hellenized Christians*, vol. 1, *A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Titus, 1-2 Timothy, and 1-3 John* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2006], 38). In this thesis, therefore, it is assumed that the implied audience, the Ephesian Christians, is in fact those to whom Paul intended to send this epistle (Eph. 1:1). For corroboration of the authenticity of the words "in Ephesus" in this verse, see Bruce M. Metzger, *A Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nded. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 532; Clinton E. Arnold, "Ephesians, Letter to the," in *Dictionary of Paul's Letters*, eds. G. F. Hawthorne et al. (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 244-45; Markus Barth, *Ephesians: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary on Chapters 1-3*, Anchor Bible 34 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1974), 67.

As to the date of its writing, this may be inferred from the fact that it was written while Paul was in prison (Eph. 3:1; 4:1; 6:20), which means it was written in Rome or Caesarea, within A.D. 60-64. For a more in-depth study of these questions, see P. T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 4-47; Nigel Turner, *A Grammar to the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1976), 84-85; Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 659-60; Klyne R. Snodgrass, *Ephesians: The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 23-29; F. Beisser, "Wann und von wem konnte der Epheserbrief verfasst worden sein?" *Kerygma und Dogma* 52 (2006): 151-64.

of what was arguably the largest cult of his day, Diana or the moon goddess, the same territorial spirit that is associated by some with Islam today.⁴² It was also the place where he experienced the greatest successes in the spiritual battles that he waged.⁴³ Therefore, from the preacher's perspective this epistle should offer potentially great insight into the nature of the spiritual conflict being waged whenever the gospel is preached. The Holy Spirit has seen fit to use these experiences in the life of Paul to convey these crucial insights to the church today.

Understanding the means to be fully empowered by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the gospel⁴⁵ fearlessly so that Christ's Church may be established and built up⁴⁶ is of supreme importance to any preacher. That power, as revealed in this epistle, is just as necessary and available today.⁴⁷ The means of maintaining the anointing or fullness of the Spirit appears here to have a correspondence to the process of continuously "putting on" Christ.⁴⁸

Those who have evidenced a powerful anointing upon their preaching ministry appear also to have recognized how desperately the preacher needs to be continuously refilled with the Holy Spirit's power, that is, to be re-energized continuously by the Holy Spirit.⁴⁹ That is because the power for preaching, as well as for sanctification, comes from God but is wholly consequent to one's faith; as one's faith in God increases, one's faith in self correspondingly decreases. What contributes to the strengthening of faith in God stems in part, at least on the preacher's side, from a continued willingness to obey the command of Eph. 5:18.⁵⁰ What this command entails in consideration of its context is of crucial import to the preacher.

⁴² George Otis, *The Last of the Giants: Lifting the Veil of Islam* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 61ff.

⁴³ Acts 19:26-27.

⁴⁴ Eph. 6:10-11.

⁴⁵ Eph. 6:19.

⁴⁶ Eph. 2:20-22.

⁴⁷ Eph. 3:16, 20.

⁴⁸ Luke 24:49; Eph. 3:17-19; 5:18; 6:10-11. That is not to say it involves an active striving for either faith or moral purity but simply allowing oneself to be so clothed by God's Spirit, that is, being Christ's workmanship through faith.

⁴⁹ Michael A. Eaton, *The Baptism of the Spirit: The Teachings of D.M. Lloyd-Jones* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1989), 126.

⁵⁰ Although this is a circular argument, it is made, nonetheless, with an appeal to its scriptural basis.

The epistle to the Ephesians begins with an extended trinitarian *berakah* in which Paul introduces God's fulfillment of his promise to Abraham in the eschatological deposit of the Holy Spirit now indwelling Jews and Gentiles alike. Jesus is the one who has sealed them as his own private possession (Eph. 1:3–14). This metaphor of sealing describes well the action of the Holy Spirit that impresses on the nature of this newly created inner man an indelible imprint of the *imago Dei* to identify that person as belonging to God (see Matt. 22:17ff.).⁵¹ The Holy Spirit is also described metaphorically here as an ἀρραβὼν, a pledge indicating that God, by giving him the Holy Spirit, is promising to fulfill in the life of this believer a perfecting and completion of the *imago Dei*. The presence of this deposit of the Holy Spirit also brings much assurance that there is reserved for him a place in God's eternal kingdom. This will be given to him along with a gracious and glorious future inheritance that includes a new, immortal, and indestructible resurrection body at that time. The Holy Spirit's abiding presence within believers is said, thereby, to guarantee that it is God's intention of ultimately fulfilling that promise to them and in them.⁵²

In this introduction, Paul also sets the stage by declaring the new and real environment of the believer's life. It is now to be lived out as if he were already in the heavenly (spiritual) realms and seated with Christ far above every other spiritual dominion and power. This is because all that power and authority is already directly available and immediately accessible to every Christian at any time and in every place through the presence of the Holy Spirit in their

⁵¹ What greater likeness to God (*imago Dei*) could possibly be attained than that by which God is personally present in the person of the Holy Spirit. The person of God becomes incarnate in the life of the Christian through the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit upon that life, which thus partakes of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). It is not unlike the process by which a piece of wood becomes fossilized.

⁵² Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 668-69; Phil. 1:6. While that image may not appear to be restored completely in the believer's life, that is in part because the remnants of the carnal nature still exert any influence, thus obscuring the ability of God's image to shine through. It is important to note that believers are sealed once and for all; that is, the sealing action that occurs at the initial baptism of the Holy Spirit is complete, so the image is also completely there even if not fully developed.

lives. This is without regard for personal circumstances or apparent outward situations. Key to understanding the power available to the preacher was how Paul viewed himself in possession of that power. His view was that he was seated far above any other conceivable power. He was essentially seated in the heavenly realms with Christ, and that is where every other Christian⁵³ is: in the throne room of God and with full access to that all-surpassing power and inexpressible glory, which is already theirs by right in their identification with Christ.⁵⁴

A more complete grasp of the significance of Paul's statement, however, requires the consideration of Paul's circumstance at the time of writing. He was under arrest and probably had been, by then, for a number of years. He was destined not long thereafter to be executed.⁵⁵ It is with this context in mind, where believers are being or are about to be engaged in an intense spiritual conflict, that the whole epistle must be read. It is also how the Ephesians themselves understood it.⁵⁶

From the natural perspective, this reason for hope was incomprehensible aside from a diagnosis of insanity. If the measure of Paul's madness, however, may be determined by the impact his words would have upon the church and the advancement of God's kingdom on earth in the ages to come, then it would be absurd to think so. It would be a challenge of gargantuan proportions to find a writer whose perception of reality was more discerning.

The importance for preachers to come to have such a vision of the unfolding of God's glory cannot be overstated. What does Paul mean when he says we are seated in the heavenly realms with Christ? This writer believes that the authority that we have been given to complete the mission Christ has given to us on earth is absolute. Therefore, no effort to thwart our mission can possibly succeed. All such efforts, despite their intentions or their temporal

⁵³ Spirit-led Christians (Rom 8:1ff.).

⁵⁴ A study of the Johannine references to the Spirit indicates a similar "sphere of the Spirit" (e.g., John 3:6; 4:21-24; 6:63; 7:39; also see Col. 3:3-4). See John M. Hamilton, *God's Indwelling Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testament*, NACSBT 1 (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2006), 59-63.

⁵⁵ Depending on whether it was written from Caesarea or Rome.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 667-68.

appearances of success, will ultimately not only fail in themselves but also serve only to further the goals in completing that mission. How crucial it is for Paul's disciples to gain this confidence through having their own spiritual insight illuminated. This becomes the focus of one of Paul's immediately subsequent prayers.

So this *berekah* section (Eph. 1:3–14) is followed by another extended passage (Eph. 1:15–2:10) in which Paul expresses a prayer of thanksgiving for this gift of the Holy Spirit to believers. In this, he asks for a renewal of the work of the Holy Spirit in the Ephesians' hearts so as to enlighten them to a more thorough knowledge of God through a more comprehensive understanding of this Spirit-inspired wisdom and revelation. This is so that they may "know" the hope of their calling and the all-encompassing extent of the all-surpassing power that is at work in them and presently accessible to them through the Holy Spirit.⁵⁷

In Eph. 2:11–22, he then begins to explain more specifically what that wisdom and revelation of the Holy Spirit entails. First, their salvation and deliverance is a work that is entirely of God's grace and as such entirely irrevocable. Moreover, that which was folly to the world — the cross — was the wisdom of God. This wisdom achieved the ends that God had purposed. It granted to God, without compromising his holiness or robbing his glory, the right to give his Spirit to those whom he had elected as his children. In giving to them his Spirit, he would secure for them their salvation and sanctification, while at the same time safeguarding his own glory in every aspect. His Spirit is now free to replicate his own image within his children, thus making them into his "workmanship." Their identity, as such, is itself a revelation of the character of God. This workmanship of God is now being put on display through their lives, to the watching cosmos, which consists of spiritual principalities in the heavenly realms, all to the glory of God.⁵⁸

Through the cross, God has also destroyed the enmity that once existed between Jew and Gentile, reconciling them to each other and to himself. They now are being built up together into his holy habitation by means of the Spirit (ἐν πνεύματι) on the foundation of the

⁵⁷ Ibid., 668-72.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 672-73.

Word, that is, prophets and apostles.⁵⁹ Paul's prayer is for the empowerment of their hearts, their inner being, through the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁰ In view of this revelation of God's will in the reconciling work of Christ, Paul then (Eph. 2:11–22) digresses to expound upon the vital and essential unity of all of God's people. Together, in Christ, they have direct access to God through the Spirit. God's presence is also manifested on earth through the same Spirit in the community of faith, which through the administration of the same Spirit the finished work of Christ is brought to completion.⁶¹

In Eph. 3:1–10, Paul expresses his amazement at having been entrusted with this new revelation as a servant of Christ through the grace afforded to him and made effective by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.⁶² In Eph. 3:11–21 he returns to, and concludes, his prayer by asking that this power of the Holy Spirit would manifest itself in individual believers' hearts by granting to them a deeper knowledge of God and thus of the magnitude of his great love for them in Christ. This will result in the formation of (or bringing to a state of maturity) Christ's image and character within them, causing them to be filled with all the fullness of God. This is said with God's work of creation (v. 10) and his administration over it (v. 15) in view. The result of gaining such an experiential knowledge of God's love will manifest itself to the world through their mutual love for each other.⁶³

⁵⁹ Many scholars claim Paul could only be referring to New Testament prophets in light of his usage of this term in similar context (see Gaffin, *Perspectives on Pentecost*). Regardless of this possibility, it is still clear that their authority stems from God, whom they represent, so their words represent God's word to them. That Eph 2:22 is foundational to the preaching enterprise, see Dennis F. Kinlaw, *Preaching in the Spirit* (Nappanee, IN: Francis Asbury Press, 1985), 55.

⁶⁰ Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*. 672–78. It is to open the eyes of their hearts (Eph. 1:18).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 681–90.

⁶² This expression of amazement is a poignant testimony to the astonishing degree of humility possessed by the apostle despite all the sufferings he endured for the sake of Christ, his church and the gospel.

⁶³ Being filled up with the fullness of God means the same thing as having the moral character of God reproduced in the life of the believer by the power of the Holy Spirit (*ibid.*, 697). The way in which we are thus to be "filled up with the fullness of God" is to love one another, having Christ's love in us and ours for one another in Christ (*ibid.*, 694).

The next and final sections of the epistle (Eph. 4:1–6:9) consist of exhortations on how these truths will work out in believers' lives. Eph. 4:1–16 begins by emphasizing how the unity and consequent peace of the body is that for which Christ died and that which the Spirit now is sent to guard. Hence, it is to be most diligently preserved through the “putting on” of certain fruits of the Spirit (i.e., Spirit-cultivated character traits and dispositions, all exercised in love) of humility, meekness, gentleness and forbearance. Then Paul explains that the reason for the Holy Spirit's gifting to individual members of the body is so that all its members may ultimately be built up together into the unity of the faith and come to a complete knowledge of Christ, the head, with each member doing its part in a strengthening and maturing body until complete maturity is reached, or until Christ's image has been brought to a state of complete perfection in them. It is expressed here so that they will have a clear understanding of their true identity in Christ and will no longer be subject to the deception that enslaves those whose minds are still cloaked in the darkness of this age.

The next section (Eph. 4:17–30) begins by stating specifically what practices one should no longer walk in and how instead one should walk in love. These sins deal primarily with speech (lying, corrupt talk) or whatever may be harmful to relationships.⁶⁴ These must be replaced with edifying and encouraging words. Theft is also mentioned. The Ephesians should work with their hands so that they may give to those truly in need. Their change in behavior is directed toward maintaining and promoting the unity of the body of which they are now members, reflecting on Eph. 4:1–16 and the work of the Spirit and Christ. This paraenesis concludes with the exhortation to “take off” the works of their old nature, “put on” the new person, and clothe themselves with

⁶⁴ Abiding in such sins is what would “grieve the Holy Spirit” (v. 30) or give place to Satan (v. 27). Since believers are sealed by the Holy Spirit and thus authentic representatives of God, their actions not only reflect upon him but also serve either to unite or to divide the body of Christ.

what they learned in Christ: their love for one for another.⁶⁵ The way they had adorned themselves with this new nature is expressly stated here as by having been renewed through the spirit/Spirit of their minds.⁶⁶

Paul then continues with another paraenetic section that continues through Eph. 5:18. Here a series of imperatives contrast light and darkness, wisdom and foolishness, and understanding and ignorance, and conclude with the final and pivotal imperative to be filled ἐν πνεύματι.

The question has been raised as to whether πνεύματι here refers to one's human spirit or to the Holy Spirit. The possibility that Paul's reference to the spirit in Eph. 4:23 refers to the human spirit has caused some commentators to believe it may have a similar meaning here. For that to be the case, however, its preposition would

⁶⁵ The Greek of Eph. 4 has in verse 23 ἀνανεοῦσθαι δὲ τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ νοῦς ὑμῶν; verse 24, καὶ ἐνδύσασθαι τὸν καινὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν κατὰ θεὸν κτισθέντα ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ καὶ ὁσιότητι τῆς ἀληθείας. Fee provides a tempting rationale to accept the translation, "to be made new by means of the Spirit in your minds and to clothe yourselves with the new person that is being created by God in the righteousness and holiness of the truth." Thus "to put on the new person" or "to have a mind renewed by the Spirit" are two ways of expressing the same reality. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 710. Whether one accepts his argument or not, because this is indirect discourse the verbs may be translated either in the imperative or indicative cases, as this writer has done above, and will not affect the conclusion about the proper translation for the next occurrence of this word.

⁶⁶ Eph. 4:23-24. The imagery of investiture with the Holy Spirit corroborates the understanding that this clothing is representative of the *imago Dei*, as that which required restoration; that the mind or heart is the object that required renewing in order for this investiture to occur; and that this is a lifetime process, although there may be ebbs and flows in the progress made. See *ibid.*, 705-12. A slight hurdle associated with the translation of τῷ πνεύματι as the Holy Spirit arises primarily because of its occurrence with the article (*ibid.*, 711-12). It is still possible and is most compatible with Paul's flow of thought throughout this epistle.

The metaphors of clothing also are in keeping with Christ's command (Luke 24:49), which almost all commentators associate with the initial baptism of the Spirit. The middle tense of the verb there implies this was the responsibility of the believer.

have to be interpreted as a dative of sphere.⁶⁷ If it can be shown that ἐν is in the instrumental case, then πνεύματι would have to refer to the Holy Spirit. Some writers have found that this ambiguity also exists in the three other places where this prepositional phrase has been used in this epistle.⁶⁸ That possibility is erased, however, when one considers Paul's use of this preposition in 1 Cor. 12:3, 1 Cor. 13, and Rom. 15:16 and 14:17. No such ambiguity exists in those cases. Each time Paul explicitly refers to the Holy Spirit, so one may rightly assume that he must refer to the Holy Spirit in each of the passages in Ephesians.

Wallace gives an even stronger defense by considering the preposition here to be instrumental, which would also demand, according to Robinson, that the object be the Holy Spirit as well (see note 69 below). Most versions, however, still translate this as a command to be filled with the Spirit.⁶⁹ Wallace argues that since the Spirit is found in the dative case with the preposition ἐν it has to be translated in an instrumental sense. Therefore, a correct interpretation would render this command to be filled “by means of” or “through

⁶⁷ J. Armitage Robinson, *Epistle to the Ephesians* (London: Macmillan, 1928), 202-3.

⁶⁸ So with Robinson, *Epistle to the Ephesians*, 202-3, although he agrees that in each case translating as the Holy Spirit appears to make the most sense.

⁶⁹ Those translations that have the command “be filled with the Spirit” include NIV, Darby, ASV, KJV, ESV, GNT, ISV, NASB, NCV, NKJV, and NRSV. NLT has “let the Spirit fill and control you.” *The New Testament: An Expanded Translation* has “be constantly controlled by the Spirit,” and YLT has “be filled in the Spirit.”

the instrumentality of” the Holy Spirit.⁷⁰ An even better understanding of the word would be “to be made complete in, and completely of” God “by means of” the Holy Spirit.⁷¹ The one performing the action is Christ. The instrument by which he performs it is the Holy Spirit. The object upon whom the action is being done is the believer, and the goal of the action is to be made like God the Father.⁷²

This is also in keeping with the idea that the Holy Spirit has been sent to us by the Father to be our helper and advocate, as opposed to the notion that the Holy Spirit is simply an agent at our disposal. The

⁷⁰ “We are never commanded to be filled with the Holy Spirit in the New Testament.” Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 94, when using the verb *πῖμπλημι* (which is used much more often than *πληρῶω* in the sense of content), and only once could it be argued that this verb takes a dative to indicate content (Rom. 15:14). There it is associated with “with all knowledge.” All other uses of *πληρῶω* that have a sense of content use the genitive case (e.g., Luke 4:1, *πλήρης πνεύματος*). With the prepositional phrase *ἐν πνεύματι* it is never appropriate to translate it this way. Consider Matt. 12:28, where Jesus replies, “If I cast out demons (*ἐν πνεύματι*).” Approximately 50 percent of the 87 occurrences in the New Testament of the dative *ἐν πνεύματι* are preceded by the preposition *ἐν*. Of those occurrences, three (Mark 1:8, 23; 2:8) could be translated using the English word “with.” However, in the case of being baptized with the Holy Spirit, none of those would have anything other than an instrumental sense. It is arguable that there is no case in which the verb is used in the sense of content with or without the preposition.

This would seem to indicate that there is a significant difference in kind between what Paul is commanding here and what occurred in Acts 2:4. Hamilton, *God’s Indwelling Presence*, 3-4, points out that the regeneration and indwelling of the Holy Spirit are two completely separate works that have often been confused, and that this indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit was not something enjoyed by Old Testament believers (see John 7:39). As an initiating event, therefore, Acts 2:4 will always maintain a certain unique quality to it that does not negate the other similarities between the effects of these commands, that is, of Jesus in Luke 24:49 as opposed to that of Paul in Ephesians 5:18.

⁷¹ This is as opposed to being self-made. This agrees with the thrust of this epistle, in which Paul describes the Ephesians as belonging to God because they are his workmanship and are being created in his image as that image is being restored by the Holy Spirit. It also sees the imagery of clothing in terms of the *imago Dei* being formed in them, and it sees that image being restored in them as they are being filled with the fullness of God (*ἐν πνεύματι*).

⁷² This interpretation agrees with Wallace (n. 24) and is similar to the way Stott describes one’s baptism in *The Baptism and Fullness*, 34ff.

command here uses the verb πληροῦσθε, which is the present passive imperative of πληρώω. This can mean to fill,⁷³ but it can also be, and very frequently is, translated “to complete” or “to bring to completion or perfection.” It is likely a gnomic present, which means that the action continues in a progressively increasing measure or intensity.⁷⁴

The participles that follow this main verb are the consequence of such filling, completing or perfecting by the Holy Spirit. The increasing difficulty in performing the activity described by those participles supports this interpretation.⁷⁵ Most translations of this passage also place a somewhat arbitrary period at the end of verse 20 and then begin a new paragraph.⁷⁶ There is little, if any, justification for attempting to cut off the flow of thought at this point.⁷⁷ In fact, everything that follows Eph. 5:18, right up to 6:10, continues and completes the thought.⁷⁸ At Eph. 6:10, one reaches the pinnacle of that command to be clothed in the Lord and in his mighty

⁷³ Andrew Lincoln, *Word Biblical Commentary on Ephesians* (Sheffield: Word, 1990), 344. Lincoln claims that it is in the content sense because when used with the verb πληροῦσθε the instrument sense is unusual. He also finds support for his position with Abbot, Robinson, and Schnackenburg.

⁷⁴ Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 170-71, 375, also 93; see Thomas K. Abbot, *International Critical Commentary: Ephesians* (New York: Scribners, 1909), 161-62.

⁷⁵ Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 375. The first participle, “speaking” to one another in psalms, is easier than “singing” to God. That, in turn, it may be argued, is easier than “giving thanks” for all things at all times. All of these would be preferable to the idea of submitting to others. Also see Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 718ff.

⁷⁶ Those having a period after verse 20 include NIV, Darby, ASV, GNT, KJV, NCV, NLT, NRSV and Young. Those having a period after verse 21 include ESV, ISV, the Message, NAS, and NKJV.

⁷⁷ Wallace, *New Testament Greek*, 340. Also see Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 719-20. Fee notes that all of the participles following the imperative in verse 18 serve to define that imperative. He would put the period after verse 23, and there only because there is a change in the nature of the exhortations following, which go from more general in the community of worship to specific relationships within households. All of the subsequent exhortations at least to 6:9, however, continue to serve that pivotal imperative.

⁷⁸ Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 639. This is also strongly supported through the analysis of Heil, in which the epistle is broken down into a series of 15 basic chiasms in which Eph 5:15-6:9 represents the twelfth unit. See John Paul Heil, *Ephesians: Empowerment to Walk in Love for the Unity of All in Christ* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 31-44.

strength so that one may be fully equipped to take a stand against all the schemes of the devil.⁷⁹

Here one discovers one reason why it is essential for believers to be clothed in God's mighty power. It is because of who they are being prepared to be in conflict with: all of the forces of darkness in the spiritual realms.⁸⁰ After having clothed themselves with the full panoply of God, believers are to take up the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. This should serve to remind preachers that whenever they proclaim God's Word from the pulpit, they are engaging in spiritual warfare and cannot afford to come to that task in any condition less than being fully prepared and equipped.⁸¹ They are literally tearing down spiritual strongholds⁸² and will inevitably come under spiritual attack.

This brings this thesis back again to its starting place and the verse upon which the whole epistle appears to hinge.⁸³ The idea that the imperative exhortation, ἀλλὰ πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι, means to "be made complete in God through the means of the indwelling Spirit" has in its favor this writer's understanding of the central theme of this epistle and goal of Paul's message to the Ephesians. Believers must allow God's Spirit to bring to complete formation in them the new person, the restored and renewed *imago Dei*. The only means to accomplish this is the power of the indwelling Spirit, which opens their hearts to understand and experience God's love for them, as Paul prayed in Eph. 3:19 ("that they may be filled with

⁷⁹ Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 651.

⁸⁰ The Ephesians were already aware of the nature of their battle. This epistle was addressing these issues from the outset, as will be shown in the exegesis below.

⁸¹ In being anything less than fully clothed in the full power of the Holy Spirit.

⁸² 2 Cor. 10:4ff.

⁸³ This would appear to be the case from the perspective of summarizing the gist of Paul's exhortation to the Ephesians. The implication of Heil's analysis would place Eph. 3:14-21 at the center of a macro-chiastic structural breakdown of the epistle. That would conclude that the epistle has the goal of "knowing the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge" as its central focus. See Heil, *Ephesians*, 43-44. This, however, agrees with the point that the means of obtaining this knowledge is through simple obedience to the command of Eph. 5:18, which itself is the central command of the three exhortations or prayers for them that are nearly identical in meaning (Eph. 3:19; 5:18; 6:10-11).

all the fullness of God,” ἵνα πληρωθῆτε εἰς πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ θεοῦ).⁸⁴ This happens as they work out their salvation in the community of believers. Thus the participles that follow and define the imperative of Eph. 5:18 all have to do with relationships, until readers finally arrive at a new set of imperatives beginning at Eph. 6:10. Here Paul restates what he meant in Eph. 5:18.⁸⁵

The components of the spiritual warrior’s armor mentioned here (the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, as well as the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God) all have genitives of apposition as their modifiers. Thus, what Paul means is to put on truth, righteousness, peace, faith and the gospel.⁸⁶ In the next verse, he adds the next indispensable component of the believer’s armament to the list. It is to pray always (ἐν πνεύματι). Paul refers not just to individual prayers but also to the corporate and individual prayers of the church body.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ The word translated “fullness” (τὸ πλήρωμα), when referring to God (Col. 1:9), refers to his divine nature or being. See Barclay A. Newman, *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament* (London: United Bible Society, 1971), 144-45. This word is also used by Jesus on occasion to refer to a garment (Matt. 9:16; Luke 2:22). The main point is that there is a synonymy of the meaning between the phrases “being filled by means of the Spirit,” “putting on the new person,” “being renewed in the *imago Dei*,” and “being clothed in the power of the Holy Spirit.”

⁸⁵ In the parallel passage in Col. 3:16, Paul replaces the Spirit with “the word of Christ.” Here is another link that reinforces the position that there needs to be a fusion between the Spirit and the Word in order for God’s power to be exercised.

⁸⁶ In defense of what Paul means here, “the word of God” is the proclamation of the gospel. See Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 726-27. Some commentators claim that the type of shield Paul mentions is the type designed to be used by soldiers in formation together with others in rank with them so as to defend against any possible penetration of arrows, darts, or spears. This may be considered potentially offensive in nature as well.

⁸⁷ As a final note, this underscores the importance of the Christian’s prayer life, of which the preacher should be the model. Aside from noting the essential quality of the prayer life, space limitations here require that the elaboration of this topic be left for others. See E. M. Bounds, *The Preacher and Prayer* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991) and *Power Through Prayer* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1972); Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (San Francisco: Harper, 1978) and *Prayer: Finding the Heart’s True Home* (San Francisco: Harper, 1992).

The first four components are all defensive in nature and allow the person so armed to stand against the attacks of the devil. In order for one to put on the four components, one has to do no more than believe the gospel and all that is entailed in it and implied by it. In other words, each believer needs to come to a more fully illuminated grasp of the truth and the meaning of the gospel.⁸⁸ All believers fail to believe the gospel to some extent in the core of their beings.⁸⁹

In summary, the command of Eph. 5:18 is best translated in the passive sense of allowing Christ to fill believers with all the fullness of God by means of the Holy Spirit. That by no means negates in any way the responsibility of the believer to continuously come to Christ, with an unquenchable thirst, seeking to be so filled.

Further, the metaphors of clothing used throughout this epistle imply there is an active component of the believer's responsibility to more fully believe the gospel by living in the reality of its truth. Such living will serve to confirm the truth of that faith to one's heart, and that faith in turn will continue to become stronger. It is by means of the growth of that faith that the *imago Dei* is brought to perfection and completion; the process by which sanctification occurs is through increasing one's faith in the gospel, not some sort of moral striving.⁹⁰ It is also as a direct result of that increase in the measure

⁸⁸ Jesus invites believers to learn from him (Matt. 11:28). The learning process is more than mere assimilation of facts, having both cognitive and affective objectives of increasing degree, for example, receiving, responding, valuing, organizing and characterizing. See Robert Mager, *Developing Attitude toward Learning* (Palo Alto, Calif.: Fearton, 1968); Leroy Ford, "Developing Performance-Oriented Learning Objectives," *Search* 4 (winter 1974): 31-40, as cited in Roy B. Zuck, *Spirit-Filled Teaching* (Nashville, TN: Word Publishers, 1998), 113. These degrees apply to believing as well as to learning.

⁸⁹ See Timothy Keller, *Preaching to the Heart*, vol. 2, CD-ROM (South Hamilton, Mass.: Ockenga Institute, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 2006), for a good defense of this crucial need of preachers and their hearers. As stated earlier (n. 31), one of the preconditions for obtaining the fullness of the Spirit and thereby to enjoy the power and illumination attendant to such a condition is to have strong faith in God. Prerequisite to this is having a presuppositional belief in the inspiration of Scriptures in their veracity, infallibility, and inerrancy.

⁹⁰ Or even striving after more faith but resting Christ's absolute sufficiency; see Ruth Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya: A Biographical History of Missions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 183.

of one's faith that the measure of one's anointing by the Holy Spirit for the empowerment of proclaiming the gospel is accomplished.

A primary goal, nonetheless, of the command of Eph. 5:18 is to find the empowerment necessary in order to be able to walk in love for the sake of the unity of Christ's church.⁹¹ This corresponds to Christ's final command to his disciples (John 15:12) to love one another as he was describing to them the consequence of their imminent reception of the gift of the Holy Spirit. The operation of this gift would be theirs so long as they abode in him, that is, as branches abide in the vine, and so were united with him and through him with each other. This concept of love is also a major emphasis in all of Paul's other epistles (e.g., Rom. 12:8–10; 1 Cor. 13; 2 Cor. 5:14; Gal. 5:22; Phil. 2:1–4; Col. 3:12–14; 1 Thess. 4:9–10; 2 Thess. 3:5; 1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 1:7; 3:10; Titus 2:2; Philemon 7) and in Hebrews 13:1. It is similarly of first priority in the epistles of Peter (e.g., 1 Peter 1:22; 3:8; 2 Peter 1:5–7). The apostle of love, John, reiterates this command on numerous occasions in his epistles (e.g., 1 John 2:5, 10; 3:10, 14, 18, 23; 4:8, 11, 12, 16–21; 5:2; 2 John 1, 5, 6; 3 John 6), as well as in Revelation, where Jesus commands the Ephesians to return to their first love (Rev. 2:4). Jude commands it (21), and James elaborates upon it (2:14–26). Jesus also elaborates upon this love in each of the Gospel accounts (e.g., Matt. 5:44–45; 7:12; 19:19; 22:39; 24:12; Mark 12:31, 33; Luke 6:27, 35; 10:27; John 13:1; 34; 15:13), as well as illustrating it in his life and death.

One may even say that the contents of the command of Paul in Eph. 5:18 is paraphrased by John in 1 John 4:12b, "if we love one another God's love lives in us and his love is made complete in us."⁹² This finds confirmation in that elsewhere John states plainly that "God is love" (1 John 4:16).

Love is unquestionably the major theme of the New Testament. The point is that love is both the result and the means of being filled

⁹¹ As mentioned earlier (n. 8), Heil, in *Ephesians*, would claim that this is the central theme and focus of this epistle.

⁹² The suggested meaning of unit 12 of Heil's chiasmally structured analysis of Eph. 5:15–6:9 is "walking in love as those who are wise." On a macro-chiastic level these verses complement Eph. 2:1–10, the third unit, for which he suggests the meaning "walking in the great love with which he loved us." See Heil, *Ephesians*, 43–44.

by the Spirit. There is no better means of acquiring, maintaining and increasing the capacity for and of the Holy Spirit's fullness than to exercise a sincere love that will promote the unity of Christ's body. There is likewise no better means of having such capacity to exercise this love than by being filled with the Spirit. The exercise of this love should then also be the greatest assurance one may gain of being filled by the Holy Spirit, as well as the strongest witness testifying to it.

When this becomes the consistent practice of the believer, that fact should in turn lessen the likelihood of grieving or quenching the Spirit. By becoming more accommodating to the Spirit's leading, the likelihood of remaining in such a state of fullness will be increased. This will also empower the believer to exert even more love and to withstand whatever temptations arise from the adversary. It should also be the means of assuring that the illumination that is so necessary for the success of the preaching enterprise will be provided.⁹³ Thus believers have what N. T. Wright refers to as the hermeneutics of love.⁹⁴

In summary, Eph. 5:18 is a command that refers to the responsibility to appropriate the dynamic charismatic power made available to believers at Pentecost. This conclusion is evident from the synonymous meaning of the verb πληροῦσθε (a form of πληρόω), which Paul uses here, with that of ἐπλήσθησαν (a form of πίμπλημι), which Luke uses to describe the effect of the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:4) or on other occasions the filling of the Holy Spirit (πίμπλημι, as in Luke 1:15, 41, 67; Acts 4:8; 9:17; 13:9; or πληρόω, as in Acts 13:52). Both instances are contrasted with the idea of being drunk, literally, filled with wine. The access one has to the Spirit's power is frequently described by the metaphor of drinking (e.g., John 4:13; 7:37-38; 1 Cor. 10:4; 12:13). The nature of drinking (to the point of satiation or inebriation) is such that this state is not maintained indefinitely but requires additional imbibing whenever those effects wear off.

Most scholars would translate the imperative ἐπλήσθησιν in a passive tense, implying the means available to the believer stem from the Spirit's constant presence and willingness to fill a believer's

⁹³ 1 John 2:10.

⁹⁴ N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God, Christian Origins and the Question of God 1* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 64.

heart under normal conditions. The major obstacle to such infilling is the need to empty the heart of anything else. Virtually all the interests vying for occupancy have to do with self. Consequently, the greatest need of the preacher, that for which he must strenuously contend and that which more than anything else will guarantee the filling of the Holy Spirit, is the capacity and willingness to deny self in whatever shape or form.

Illumination

The correspondence between fullness of the Spirit and illumination has already been touched upon in the exegesis of Ephesians. Both the starting point and the goal of exegesis is an increased experiential knowledge of and fellowship with the one true living God that will leave an indelible impression upon the heart, mind and soul of the believer. That is, the believer is to be illumined. Thus the disciplines of exegesis and spirituality are closely linked.⁹⁵

The necessity of receiving illumination from the Holy Spirit for any success in the preaching enterprise stems from the fallen condition of the human heart. As a result of the fall and alienation of man from his Creator, an impenetrable barrier was established that prevented the possibility of perceiving or looking upon that which was divine (Genesis 3:22–24). The darkness of man’s heart spelled the loss of any capacity for acknowledging the truth of God (Gen. 6:5). The enslavement of man’s will to sin resulted in a dysfunctional faculty for reasoning that could not accept the reality of God’s righteousness, justice, goodness and glory (John 8:34; Rom. 1:18). Consequently, it became impossible for man to come to knowledge of the truth (1 Cor. 12:3) through his own investigation, despite the fact that such truth was implicit in every aspect of his world (Ps. 19:1–7; Rom. 1:19). Therefore the wisdom of God and the meaning of the gospel remain hidden (1 Cor. 1:18ff.).

This means that the first and foremost prerequisite for anyone to be able to preach the gospel is salvation, that is, being born again by God’s Spirit (John 3:3ff.; Matt. 11:25–27; 2 Cor. 3:14–18). When-

⁹⁵ This is despite the fact that most seminaries treat hermeneutics, exegesis, and homiletics in a completely different category from which they will deal with spirituality (see chap. 1 of this thesis). See Gordon Fee, *Hearing the Spirit in the Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 4.

ever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil that has covered his eyes is removed so that he sees God's glory. Moreover, whenever this happens, God makes his light to shine in a believer's heart to give the light of the glory of God in the face of Christ (2 Cor. 4:6).

This is only the beginning of a progressively developing and increasingly abundant radiance of God's glory being reflected in and through believers' lives as a result of the Spirit's continuing work (2 Cor. 3:18). This also means that there will continue to remain a diminishing remnant of the sinful and darkened nature that will require ongoing and diligent efforts, by God's grace, to repress, deny and extinguish (Matt. 10:38; 16:24). It means that the ability to discern the truth in God's Word and in his world, so necessary for proclaiming that truth, will depend upon growth in grace and maturity as believers, as well as the level of intimacy they have in their relationship with the Lord. In addition, God will not reveal everything to them at once, but only as they need to know it, in part because they are not able to bear it all (John 16:12) and because it is to God's glory to conceal a matter and to believers' glory to search it out (Proverbs 25:2).

One definition of illumination is the capacity for having a greater insight into a truer and deeper meaning of God's Word and the nature of God for the purpose of applying that experiential knowledge and insight to one's life and communicating it to the church and the world. It is obtained through the entirely gracious provision of the Holy Spirit on the basis of Christ's solely sufficient merit and God's sovereign electing call to the end of his own glory. It is absolutely necessary for any proper exegesis or application of the meaning and intent of the Word of God. It involves opening the eyes of the heart by clearing away such obstacles as may hinder their spiritual visual acuity. This is done by exposing any untruths, erroneous attitudes, biased opinions or hardness of heart that may exist and that would otherwise precondition and prejudice the interpretation of any passage blinding the reader from accepting the Word on its own terms.

The effect of illumination should always be a conviction of sin, a perception of righteousness and a judgment.⁹⁶ This should result in a change of the values and beliefs of the individual and the transformation of his character so as to reflect a greater degree of godliness and exhibition of the fruits of the Spirit, which include

⁹⁶ John 16:8-9.

love, joy, peace, kindness, forbearance, gentleness, perseverance, self-control, faithfulness, humility, hope and assurance. At the same time, it should arrest and subdue the attributes of fear, guilt, shame, despair, pride, condemnation, boastfulness, hatred and deceit, so as to produce holiness or sanctification and greater freedom in Christ.

The hindrances to illumination would include preconceived ideas of who God is (i.e., what he is like and culturally accepted mores and value judgments regarding modes of behavior). Other hindrances include pride, lust, self and ingratitude. Many of these are presuppositions of the heart and thus are subconsciously held.

An indispensable means of illumination comes by continually being filled by and in communion with the Holy Spirit, the author of the Word who also teaches believers and will bring back to their active memories those verses of Scripture they have read in the past. This will in many instances enable believers to see them in the light of whatever new information or other scriptural passages may be coming under present consideration.

The process of illumination begins with an increasing appreciation for the holiness, omnipotence and omniscience of God, which inculcates an immediate apprehension and fear of retribution that is merited by the offenses of sins (Prov. 1:7). This occurs through the application of the Word, specifically the Law, by the Holy Spirit to the heart (Rom. 7:8–25: “The light of the law brings conviction of sin”) although not by itself the power to obey it.

The process of illumination continues by the revelation of God’s love, mercy and compassion in Christ and his willing propitiation of God’s wrath, as well as his invitation to find refuge in an acceptance of the sufficiency of his atoning sacrifice. This occurs through the gospel being applied by the Holy Spirit. When someone is born again and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, the commandments of the law are written upon that person’s heart so that he now possesses the power to obey, and obedience becomes second nature.

In addition to the aforementioned means of broadening the avenues by which the Spirit’s illumination may be obtained, there should also be a removal of the internal obstacles within the heart against hearing God’s voice. It is crucial to attend vigilantly to the condition of the heart. It is by the eyes of the heart that believers apprehend the things of the Spirit; this is the part of their being that most needs to be enlightened (Eph. 1:18).

The condition of the heart is most comprehensively described by Jesus in the parable of the sower (Matt. 13:3–23; Mark 4:3ff.; Luke 8:5ff.). The immediate context of this parable makes it clear that Jesus is dealing with the issue of illumination and spiritual blindness (Matt. 13:13–16). Although the three qualities of soil, representative of the heart, that do not produce fruit would certainly apply to nonbelievers, they also have benefit for consideration of the conditions of believers' hearts. Each condition is experienced by believers, although to a lesser degree than by nonbelievers. Even the good soil results in different quantities of fruit being produced, indicating that there are different qualities of the condition of heart among believers. And the value of this parable would be significantly diminished if, from a heuristic perspective, it applied only to the condition of unbelievers' hearts. However, the parable is repeated in all of the Synoptic Gospels, indicating that it was of crucial importance to understand. Not only was it repeated, despite its considerable length, but also it was interpreted in each Gospel, and with it was given the solemn admonition for those who have ears to hear, to hear! This admonition obviously was directed to believers.

Therefore, what factors hinder one's ability to access spiritual illumination? What may believers do about them in order to have hearts that are more fertile from the standpoint of being spiritually illuminated?

The first condition mentioned is the soil in which the seed falls along the wayside. It is immediately consumed by the birds. Jesus likens this to those who do not understand the word because Satan immediately snatches it away. Soil on the path was hardened, having been packed down by constant walking. Hardness of heart occurs when hurts or grievances go unresolved and result in bitterness. The heart loses its capacity to respond because it develops a protective shell. Consequently, no illumination is able to penetrate. This is a typical condition of the unbeliever. For believers, the appropriate response to offensive words or actions is to find healing in God and extend forgiveness to others, which is possible only through the exercise of faith.

The second condition has to do with seed falling on rocky soil, which receives the word with joy. But, because faith cannot develop sufficient roots, it merely springs up, is scorched by the sun, withers and dies. This condition is likened to those who are not able to per-

severe because the word has not penetrated the heart sufficiently. Persecution because of the word will not be endurable because one's belief in God's promises, his presence and his provision is too weak. This is why it is important to count the cost of discipleship before committing oneself so that the commitment will be commensurate with reality. A reality check can be made by examining Christ's life and the commitment that he demonstrated. He told his disciples that they would be required to drink from the same cup as he. Unless believers are willing to assume the same level of commitment, then they should not expect that it will be possible to experience the illumination or infilling of the Spirit that will require enduring whatever suffering or dark night of the soul it may take. Note that the fullness of the Spirit experienced by Christ was not evident at his baptism but only after having spent 40 days fasting in the desert.⁹⁷ Cultivation of one's heart is a personal responsibility. Regular inventories and frank assessments are necessary and can be accomplished only with the aid of the Spirit and the Word of God.

The last condition of the heart was soil upon which had already grown a considerable quantity of thorny weeds. Those weeds eventually choked any plants that the seed produced and made it unfruitful. This condition applies to many Christians in Western, affluent and consumption-driven societies. In this case, the preacher needs to make a radical assessment of his values. Jesus said that one cannot be his disciple unless he is willing to give up everything he has in this world, including any other relationships. It is the will that matters to God. To prevent the distractions of the world from becoming a distraction or preoccupation, the preacher needs to make the cultivation of his relationship with God his highest priority and re-evaluate his own assessment of that relationship on a regular basis.

That responsibility of making this assessment is incumbent upon every preacher. It involves not only knowing what are the marks⁹⁸ of spirituality and of carnality or what may be his besetting

⁹⁷ Luke 4:1. It is the nature of God's Word that it bears fruit only after penetrating the depths of the heart. This does not occur until after an exilic experience is endured (e.g., Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Samuel, David [as opposed to Saul], Solomon, Daniel, and others).

⁹⁸ For a list of such marks, see Gal. 5:19-20 for those that are carnal and Gal. 5:22-23 for those that are spiritual.

sins but also the possibility of seeking out a brother or sister in the Lord with whom the preacher may develop the trust and commitment to be accountable and to call each other into account regularly.

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PNEUMATOLOGY AND THE CHRISTIAN TRINITY

by Dr. Bob Hughes

In Christian theology, the Holy Spirit is considered the third member of the Godhead, joining God the Father and God the Son (Jesus Christ) as one God. To have a mature view of the Godhead, then, requires a fundamental understanding and acceptance of the Trinity. How does the Holy Spirit fit into this broader concept of “God,” along with the Father and the Son? This presents a huge problem for humanity, as Hans Kung put it, “... the Spirit still remains, for many, theologically absolutely unintelligible” (Kung 696). Admittedly, this inscrutable doctrine of the Trinity is impossible to comprehend in human, natural terms. The reason is simple: The Trinity is not natural, but rather, supernatural. This means that no known natural law, and no known natural mind, can explain how one God can show his very being in three distinct ways and yet remain unified as one. Several English language terms have been tried

to help with comprehension of this spiritual, supernatural mystery: the three-membered Godhead, the triadic formula, the divine trinity, the Godhead trilogy, the Three-in-One, the Undivided Godhead, and of course, the more common term, the Trinity, among many others.

So, in a natural world governed by natural laws, the insertion of supernatural laws becomes hard to understand because the supernatural level is not where humans normally operate and what they know. Though difficult to fathom, this supernatural aspect of laws existing above and beyond the scope of natural laws can be illustrated by several things that Jesus did. For instance, there is no known natural law for turning water into wine (John 2:1–11), or feeding a multitude from five small loaves and two fish (Matt. 14:17–21; Mark 6:38–44; Luke 9:12–17; John 6:5–13). Naturally, it just cannot be done. But if a supernatural law, above and beyond natural law, is in operation, and not subject to natural law limitations, natural impossibilities can become supernatural realities.

It is a serious error, though, to think that supernatural law negates and does away with natural law. Supernatural applications do not negate natural law; they simply act outside of and above natural law as a more powerful and superior operation. The Law of Gravity states, in simple terms, what goes up must come down because gravitational principles will see to it. However, if one puts to use, say, a Law of Rocket Thrust that is more powerful than the Law of Gravity, what goes up may not come back down. In this case, the Law of Rocket Thrust does not negate the Law of Gravity; it simply works outside and beyond that law as a more powerful force. So it is with supernatural law compared to natural law. Both exist but each operates in its respective sphere with supernatural law absolutely the more forceful and the only one of the two with crossover powers into the other's realm.

Though the New Testament nowhere discusses the Trinity as a formal doctrine, "It does speak repeatedly of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit ... in such a way as to compel a trinitarian understanding of God" (Stagg 38). A supernatural existence of three-in-one is precisely how Scripture depicts the one omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient God of the universe to the world. This is "Trinitarian oneness," not a "tri-theistic, three-god" depiction. Naturally, this is difficult for human nature to comprehend completely.

This difficulty is foreseen in Holy Scriptures and the term “mystery” (humanly speaking) is often used to help human consciousness through this problem of the existence of one, trifold Godhead (Eph. 1:1–22; 6:17–24; Col. 2:2–5; 1 Tim. 3:9–16). Max Anders put the difficulty this way,

“The doctrine of the Trinity, that there is one God who exists eternally in three Persons, one in substance yet three in subsistence, is one of the central teachings of Christianity. Yet it is one of the most difficult to understand and one of the most frequently choked upon, for the simple reason that it seems impossible. One God exists in three Persons. Even to write it or read it, one stumbles over the mathematics. If something is one, it cannot be three. If something is three, it cannot be one” (qtd. in Wagner 74).

Anders rightly (as quoted above by Wagner) fingers the problem from the natural, human standpoint. In spite of the difficulty of apprehending this concept, trying to divide the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit into separate entities from each other creates a worse difficulty. Dividing them would either create three individual and co-equal gods, or have one or two of them subordinate to the other and thus create a class of demigods (Feurbach 7ff, 263-4). Monotheism demands one God.

It is faith in the supernatural power of an unequalled Deity that resolves this issue satisfactorily. Each of the Trinity manifestations (persons) serves distinctive purposes within that unified whole with a singleness of intent and agreement. The one most powerful unifying factor that clearly displays this “singleness” of the Godhead is “love.” “Love as the power that manifests itself in the mutual relations of the Trinitarian persons is identical with the divine essence” (Pannenberg 427). Love, then, is not a quality of the Godhead, but is its very essence, substance and supernatural state of being. Love is therefore not a quality of God, but is God absolutely. This love is for all of creation and is unconditional, unmerited, and is the very heartbeat of this unity. Someone has well said that “Love” is another way to spell “God.” The Scripture is very plain that God HAS power, God HAS knowledge, God HAS wisdom, but that God IS love (1 John 4:7–10; John 3:16). God the Father is largely seen as Creator (Gen. 1; 2:1–3), Sustainer (Job 33:4), and Lover of all his Creation (John 3:16). God the Son is largely seen as Creator (John

1:1–3), Sacrifice (Heb. 1:1–18), Messiah/Redeemer (Job 19:25–27; Mark 8:27–29; Gal. 3:13; Rev. 5:9), and Lover of a Lost and Dying Humanity (Matt. 18:11; John 14:1–21). The Holy Spirit is largely seen as Creator (Gen. 1:2), Instructor/Guide (John 16:13; 1 Cor. 2:10–16; 1 Cor. 12:3–13), Comforter/Strengthener (John 14:16–18, 26), Reprover (Convictor) of sin (John 16:7–11), Dispenser of Spiritual Gifts (1 Cor. 12–14), and Lover of the Family of God and the Lost (Rom. 8:26–27). Again, note that the single most unifying factor is that of “love” for all of creation. Their specific offices may involve specific duties, but love is the single, unifying constant at every turn that directs these activities and defines the unity.

The Godhead is indivisible in a way that is humanly impenetrable mentally, while showing the world three distinct, operative manifestations. This existence is often called the “Undivided Trinity” (“Catechism of the Catholic Church” 253). John (1 John 5:7) plainly states this oneness, though some critics have suggested that this passage is an interpolation by some editor or other and may not even belong in the original. Regardless of that contention, other Scripture references reinforce and underscore the Trinitarian nature of God so that passage is certainly not an aberration. Consider what Jesus said in John 14:6–31 about his relationship to the Father and the Holy Spirit (the Comforter) that he would send after his ascension to the Father. The Godhead is totally unfettered and absolutely non-restrained to the full extent of the terms omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient. Luke 1:37 states this perfectly when the angel is explaining to Mary how it is possible that she is expecting a child without having had sexual relations with a man. A virgin becoming pregnant under those conditions is naturally impossible. Isaiah had prophesied just such a thing with, “Therefore the lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Is. 7:14, KJV). Young women (as the RSV translates the word “virgin” in this context) have babies every day. That is not much of a “sign.” That is regular, normal, expected and usual. However, if a virgin should conceive and bear a child, now that is a SIGN indeed! (The RSV translators might need to reconsider this point.) Though in the natural world a virgin giving birth could not happen, in the supernatural realm, all things are possible. Luke nails it down in this situation (and all others) with, “For with God nothing shall be impossible” (1:37).

As conventional Christian wisdom has it, the impossible with God does not take even one second longer.

Human understanding as to how the Holy Trinity can exist as three-in-one is also hindered by the fact that there is nothing else to which we may perfectly compare God. There is nothing else in the universe like God. He is the absolute singularity. Usually, comparisons are helpful for clarification and seeing deeper into a subject. But here all comparisons would fall far short of accurately describing “what God is like.” Analogies and comparisons might be of limited use, and might help some, but since the Godhead is alone in its selfness, it stands alone, truly. However, we can glimmer from God’s creation some hints as to his nature, if we are careful not to think we have achieved the impossible with a perfect description of Perfection Itself. God will always remain above all comparisons.

Since the Holy Trinity is the founding base of everything, and since “... God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, ...” (Gen. 1:26–27), there might be an indicative clue here (being careful, remember, not to “push” things too far logically, or to think we have found the perfect humanly contrived description of the Godhead since God’s aloneness is absolute). Trying to reason about things, though, is why God gave brains to us, and as long as we do not substitute human reasoning for divine revelation, we are well within scriptural boundaries (Is. 1:18). So, let’s ruminate a bit about things from a trinitarian (small “t”) perspective. Human beings are tri-partite: body, mind and spirit (soul, some would say for the latter word). Could this be a tiny trinity model of sorts? Is this what is meant by the words, “in our image”? Once more, resisting the urge to declare that we have a perfect picture of God unfolded before us through natural comparisons, let’s look at several hints for whatever they may be worth.

Suppose we continue just a bit more with the human being as body, mind and spirit (perhaps “soul”), as made in God’s image (Gen. 1, again). Would it be absolutely wrong to say that the human body has somewhat of a parallel in Jesus Christ the Son since he came in a physical body? Could the human mind with its logic, thinking ability, and capacity for obtaining wisdom and directing action be somewhat related to the omniscience of the mind of God the Father who sent the Son and who maintains authority and control over all things? Could the human spirit, even if called “soul,” be

a sort of foreshadowing of the work of the Holy Spirit in the way the deeper callings of the human spirit keep playing with our consciousness and consciences? Naturally, human nature is limited while the supernatural Godhead is not, as already discussed, but this may be of some help for trying to delve deeper into this mystery.

Or, consider the preponderance of the numeral three awash in the universe-at-large. Of course there are other important numbers as well, but the number three (a God number) is repeated too often to seem circumstantial. So, without trying to become a superstitious numerologist of some stripe or other, examine the following list as a starting place (and this is certainly not intended to be an exhaustive list by any means): the atom, building block of all creation, has three components (protons, neutrons, electrons); there are three forms of matter (solids, liquids, gasses); three known dimensions in human experience (length, breadth, depth); three divisions to time (past, present, future); three full measures of positive description (good, better, best); three full measures of negative description (bad, worse, worst); three primary colors from which all humanly visible colors come (red, yellow, blue); three natural stages of existence (birth, life, death; remembering of course that granting immortality is not counted here as that is a supernatural action — Thess. 4:15–18; 1 Cor. 15:50–58); three stages for any action or activity (beginning, middle, end); three organizers of systematic thought (introduction, body, conclusion); three parts to syllogistic logic using major premise, minor premise, conclusion; three concrete forms of existence (animal, vegetable, mineral); three levels of mathematical measure (below average, average, above average); three descriptors of motion (backward, lateral, forward); the family trilogy (father, mother, offspring); and of course, the Trinity. The whole natural universe seems to mirror the image of a supernatural God. His name and signature are all over it.

Another example, as limited as it may be for deep theology, causes us to admit that we only “know in part” (1 Cor. 13:9–12) for now. Since the Godhead is perhaps best described as being one in supernatural nature but three in personhood, what does that mean? It means that there are three ways in which God manifests himself to his creation, though his supernatural nature never changes. He is one God with three distinct forms that confront humanity, sin, the devil, etc., and yet remains united as having one super-natu-

ralness. That nature is to love: the Father loves, the Son loves, the Spirit loves. Now, the question remains in the human mind, how is this possible to be Three-in-One? We have admitted that the answer is because it is supernatural and beyond natural explanation, which makes the Trinity a mystery to the human mind in many ways. However, we can get a small, imperfect glimpse as “we see through a glass, darkly” as Paul said (1 Cor. 13:12). We truly can only know in part now (Paul again, 1 Cor. 13), but by deep reasoning and thinking seriously about this Godhead who loves us as the Trinity, we can perhaps strengthen our faith by another example.

The imperfect example we shall use is that of common water, or to science, H₂O. Water can occur in three distinct forms though its nature is always to be H₂O. If taken below 32 degrees Fahrenheit, H₂O becomes a solid, but it is always by nature, H₂O, though this form is solid. If held between 33 degrees and 211 degrees Fahrenheit, H₂O assumes a liquid form but its nature is still H₂O. If subjected to temperatures at 212 degrees Fahrenheit and beyond, H₂O becomes a gas, or steam, yet a third form, but its nature is still H₂O. Therefore, though H₂O never changes its nature of being H₂O, it can be all three known forms of matter, depending upon circumstances as called. The supernatural nature of God is one God but there are three ways in which he shows himself to his creation as circumstances may require, though the nature of the Trinity remains constant. Love is the unifier of the Godhead oneness, but at the same time, that oneness is perceived in three personhood applications, though the supernatural nature never changes. (We do not need to rush out and proclaim that God is like water and begin to worship thusly, but the analogy, as imperfect as it is, may help some.)

The equilateral triangle that is sometimes used to depict the Trinity is also an instructive analogy, though, like all the others, is somewhat limited, of course. The nature of an equilateral triangle is to have three equal angles that show that nature. Its nature is not that of a rectangle, a square, a trapezoid, or even a right triangle, etc. It has three distinct and co-equal angles that identify its nature as an equilateral triangle. It is three-in-one by nature as the triangle is one geometric figure with three distinguishing features. Might this give us some thought of the Godhead, however imperfect the illustration? The very nature of the equiangular, equilateral triangle is to be a co-equal three-in-one, and we recognize it as such though

it is only one geometric figure. At the same time, that one also has a three-ness existence that actually defines it.

So, the Holy Spirit cannot be totally separated from the Trinity in any meaningful way, with perhaps one limited exception. If the particular work of the Holy Spirit is considered, that is, if the special offices the Spirit performs are collected into a canon, we get a glimpse, a feeling for, who the Spirit is from what the Spirit does. We know from Scripture, human experience, and the teachings of Jesus, that: the Spirit convicts of sin (John 16:7–11); teaches, leads, and guides to truth (John 14:26); comforts, strengthens, and encourages believers (John 14:16–18); empowers disciples (Luke 24:49; Acts 2); and distributes spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12), among other things. Though these duties may be the particular provenance of the Holy Spirit, they in no way separate him (in the sense of dividing him apart) from the other two members of the Trinity.

The best news is that we do not have to rely upon our imperfect examples and attempts to understand the Trinity, or the work of the Holy Spirit, when we have revealed Scripture and sure revelation to rightly direct us. There will always be some mystery connected with faith because by very definition, faith is “... the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). That is, things are seen in the natural world from a natural perspective. On the supernatural level, what creature can possibly understand its Creator? One is clearly greater and far beyond the other in understanding, knowledge, power and wisdom. But if the Creator reveals to the creature some of that supernatural fixative, whatever and however it is, the creature can rest easy knowing things are as they should be, even those difficult to mentally habituate. Let us revel in the revelation that deals with doubt and mental questioning, and let us do it with thanks to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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A HISTORICAL ARGUMENT FOR THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

By Rev. David A. Richards

Christians throughout church history have gathered over countless Sundays to sing and worship Jesus Christ, frequently making mention of his death and resurrection. It has become something of a cultural phenomenon. Christians who do not even attend a church on a regular basis will make a point to show up on Easter Sunday. Christians gather together to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Do they pause amongst all of the holiday rituals or even during their standard Sunday service to consider the importance of what they are claiming in worship? The real question is this: *Is the resurrection of Jesus Christ just merely a good story?* Is it a moral fable told to teach a lesson? Did the resurrection of Jesus

Christ actually happen or is it just a mythological tale that has been continuously handed down simply because tradition demands it?⁹⁹

The apostle Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians is bluntly clear about the real importance of the resurrection in relation to the Christian faith.¹⁰⁰ Paul writes that if Christ was not raised from the dead then the Christian faith is worthless and its adherents are rather pitiful people. Without the resurrection there is no salvation, and there is nothing to worship. Furthermore, all of the people who have died believing in the resurrection of Jesus have perished in vain. That is, they have perished in vain if indeed the resurrection did not occur as an actual historical event.

The point in this passage is abundantly clear. The Christian faith rises and falls on the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus

⁹⁹ Rudolf Bultmann, 1941, argued that the New Testament presents a mythological worldview. The stories written in it cannot be interpreted in terms of our modern scientific understanding because they are primitive mythological tales. People can get truth from the New Testament but it cannot be understood as a historical account. Schubert Ogden. *New Testament and Mythology and Other Basic Writings*: Rudolf Bultmann, *New Testament and Mythology: The Problem of Demythologizing the New Testament Proclamation* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1984), 1-43.

¹⁰⁰ Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; ¹⁴ and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. ¹⁵ Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; ¹⁷ and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied. ²⁰ But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. ²¹ For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive (1 Cor. 15:12-22 NASB).

Christ.¹⁰¹ Either Christ did in fact rise from the dead, or if not, then every church ought to be torn down and every copy of the Bible thrown to the flames.

Having established the importance of this one singular event, it becomes necessary to ask the question of the real historicity of the resurrection. Is the resurrection a historically documentable event, or just a common fable that Christians hope might have happened but cannot demonstrate? What evidence is there for the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

To begin to answer this question, another question must first be asked. Did Jesus Christ actually exist? Considering the Gospel writers' position in the church, their writings *at this point* in the discussion are suspect. If the only proof of Jesus' existence are the writings of a few isolated people, it becomes possible that these few people might have made the whole thing up. Therefore, it becomes helpful to seek sources outside the Christian faith and close enough to the events in question to be considered primary source material.

The Roman historian Tacitus¹⁰² wrote of the great fire (A.D. 64) that leveled large portions of Rome.¹⁰³ In doing so, he mentions how Emperor Nero shifted the blame for the fire away from himself. He did this by placing the blame on a group of *undesirable people* who

¹⁰¹ “The very nature of Scripture demands that the exegete have some skills in investigating the historical-cultural background of the NT texts. The NT, after all, does not come in the form of timeless aphorisms; every text was written in a given first-century time/space framework.” Gordon Fee, *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 96. Also: “Whether we are comfortable with it or not, Christianity does indeed stand or fall on certain historical facts — not merely historical claims, but historical facts. Among these facts that are most crucial to the Christian faith is that of Jesus' resurrection from the dead.” Ben Witherington, *New Testament History A Narrative Account* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 166.

¹⁰² Tacitus, along with being a historian was also a political figure. He held various titles finally becoming Proconsul in the province of Asia in A.D. 112 His work, *The Annals*, was probably written between A.D. 110 and 120 and covered the time from Tiberius in A.D. 14 to the death of Nero in 68. Cancik and Schneider, “*Tacitus*”: *Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopedia of the Ancient World*, vol. 14 (Boston, MA: Brill, 2009), 106.

¹⁰³ Frend and Stevenson, *A New Eusebius: Documents Illustrating the History of the Church to A.D. 337* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 2.

called themselves Christians. Nero also punished them with the *utmost refinements of cruelty*. In his description of these Christians, Tacitus explains that they got their name from their founder *Christus* (Christ, in Latin). Also, this Christ was executed in the reign of Tiberius by Pontius Pilate. Tacitus further explains that it was thought that this *disease* had been dealt with. It then broke out once more not only in Judea, where it started, but also in Rome itself.¹⁰⁴ Tacitus confirms specific details of the gospel accounts with regards to the place, time and severity of the sentence of Jesus.¹⁰⁵ These details, being echoed in the gospel accounts, offer evidence of Jesus' life from outside the gospels.

Another historical tidbit that can be gleaned from writings outside the Gospels comes from a man by the name of Suetonius.¹⁰⁶ In his work, "Lives of the Caesars," he mentions the expulsion of the Jews from Rome by the Emperor Claudius.¹⁰⁷ This event has been dated to around A.D. 49¹⁰⁸ and it is mentioned in the book of Acts.¹⁰⁹ Suetonius writes that Claudius expelled the Jews from

¹⁰⁴ "Therefore, to scotch the rumor, Nero substituted as culprits, and punished with the utmost refinements of cruelty, a class of men, loathed for their vices, whom the crowd styled Christians. Christus, the founder of the name, had undergone the death penalty in the reign of Tiberius, by sentence of the Procurator Pontius Pilatus, and the pernicious superstition was checked for a moment, only to break out once more, not merely in Judea, the home of the disease, but in the capital itself, where all things horrible or shameful in the world find a vogue." Tacitus, *The Annals of Tacitus XV, XLIV* (Loeb Classical Library)

¹⁰⁵ Matthew 27:2; Mark 15:1; Luke 3:1-2; John 19:6

¹⁰⁶ Suetonius was born around A.D. 70 to high class parents. He was trained as a legal advocate and was a court official under Emperor Hadrian. Suetonius is most known for his biographies of twelve Roman emperors, which he wrote around the year 128 or earlier. Cancik and Schneider, *Suetonius [2] S. Tranquillis*, C. Brill's *New Pauly: Encyclopedia of the Ancient World*, vol. 13 (Boston, MA: Brill, 2008), 918.

¹⁰⁷ "Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome." Suetonius, *The Lives of the Caesars: The Deified Claudius V, XXV* (Loeb Classical Library).

¹⁰⁸ Frend and Stevenson, 2.

¹⁰⁹ And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them, (Acts 18:2 NASB)

Rome because of Chrestus. It is possible that the disturbances were being made by a person named Chrestus as this was a common name.¹¹⁰ The more likely scenario, however, is that this is merely a misspelling of Christus (Christ).¹¹¹ As the conflict between the traditional Jews and those Jews who were proclaiming Jesus Christ as the Messiah escalated, disturbances in the city became a problem. The result being that Emperor Claudius simply kicked out all Jews regardless of which side they were on. The Romans, at this point, still saw Christians as simply another sect within Judaism.¹¹²

If this is truly a reference to Jesus Christ (which it more than likely is) then it further supports what Tacitus had written, that after the execution of Jesus Christ by Pilate, Christianity was still a growing movement. The Christian church grew to the point that by A.D. 49 it was beginning to become such a problem for Rome that the emperor wanted them out of his city.¹¹³

Yet another reference from outside the church comes from a collection of letters sent from Pliny¹¹⁴ (the younger) to the Roman emperor Trajan. The collected letters to and from the emperor deal with a variety of subjects. On one occasion Pliny writes to ask for

¹¹⁰ Bart Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist: The Historical Argument for Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: Harper One, 2012), 53.

¹¹¹ F.F. Bruce argues that “Chrestus” was a common slave name, and was a popular misspelling of Christus (Christ). F.F. Bruce, *Jesus & Christian Origins Outside the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1974), 21.

¹¹² Justo Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: The Early Church to the Present Day* (Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 2010), 32-33.

¹¹³ Josh McDowell points out that in less than 20 years after the death of Christ (about A.D. 30) the Christian church has become such a growing movement that it has even reached Rome. Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 121-122.

¹¹⁴ Pliny (called “the Younger” to distinguish him from his uncle) was born A.D. 61 or 62. He came from a noble family and upon his parents’ deaths came to live with his uncle. He was well educated and had a fairly successful political career eventually serving as Legate in the province of Bithynia about the A.D. 109. He probably died before 117, which places the writing of this letter between A.C. 109 and 117. Cancik and Schneider, *Plinius [2] P. Caecilius Secundus, C. (Pliny the Younger)*. Brill’s *New Pauly: Encyclopedia of the Ancient World*, vol.11 (Boston, Mass: Brill, 2012), 390.

advice on dealing with the Christians. In this letter Pliny describes to Trajan some facts about Christians that he was able to learn from those interrogated Christians that had renounced their faith, made offerings to the gods and to the emperor, and cursed Christ (because no true Christian can be forced to do that).¹¹⁵ These were released. Others who refused to denounce Christ and worship the gods were executed.¹¹⁶ This letter shows that not only was the Christian church still around and considered a problem for the empire, but it also shows that the early Christians were in the habit of meeting together and worshipping Christ as God.

Having looked at Roman sources from around the first century there is one more writer who ought to be considered. This one, also

¹¹⁵ “They affirmed, however, the whole of their guilt, or their error, was, that they were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verse a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and bound themselves by a solemn oath, not to any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble to partake of food — but food of the ordinary and innocent kind.” Pliny, *The Letters of Pliny X, XCVI* (Loeb Classical Library)

¹¹⁶ “In the meanwhile, the method I have observed towards those who have been denounced to me as Christians is this; I interrogated them whether they were Christians; if they confessed it I repeated the question twice again, adding the threat of capital punishment; if they still persevered, I ordered them to be executed. For whatever the nature of their creed might be, I could at least feel no doubt that contumacy and inflexible obstinacy deserved chastisement. . . . Those who denied they were, or had ever been, Christians, who repeated after me an invocation to the gods, and offered adoration, with wine and frankincense, to your image, which I had ordered to be brought for that purpose, together with those of the gods, and who finally cursed Christ — none of which acts, it is said, those who are really Christians can be forced into performing — these I thought it proper to discharge.” Pliny, *The Letters of Pliny. X, XCVI* (Loeb Classical Library).

outside of the Christian church, is a Jewish historian named Flavius Josephus.¹¹⁷

In his work “The Antiquities of the Jews” he mentions Jesus a couple of times. One of these times is considered more controversial than the other. On one occasion Josephus writes about James, the brother of Jesus who was called Christ. James was brought before the Sanhedrin and executed before the new Roman governor could arrive.¹¹⁸ In another place Josephus mentions Jesus and seemingly informs his readers that Jesus had been crucified by Pilate and even was raised from the dead three days later.¹¹⁹

The authenticity of this passage, however, has been called into question. On one hand, all of the existing manuscripts of this work have this passage, other ancient writers have mentioned it, and the language in it is consistent with Josephus’ writing. On the other

¹¹⁷ Flavius Josephus, who lived from about A.D. 37 to 100, seems to have been a noted scholar even at a young age. He was sent to Rome once to negotiate the release of some priests. After this successful endeavor, he was later placed in command of the Galilean forces during the Jewish uprisings. Upon his capture he flattered Vespasian with a prophecy that he would become emperor. Vespasian let Josephus live to see if the prophecy would come true. When it did, Josephus spent the rest of his life working for the Romans. During this time he composed his two well known works *Jewish Wars* and *Antiquities of the Jews*. Skolnik and Berenbaum, “Josephus Flavius,” *Encyclopedia Judaica Second Edition* vol. 11(Detroit, MI:Thomas Gale, 2007), 435.

¹¹⁸ “Ananus thought that he had a favorable opportunity because Festus was dead and Albinus was still on the way. And so he convened the judges of the Sanhedrin and brought before them a man named James, the brother of Jesus who was called Christ, and certain others. He accused them of having transgressed the law and delivered them up to be stoned.” Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities XX, 200* (*Loeb Classical Library*)

¹¹⁹ “About that time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he was one who wrought surprising feats and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many of the Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the Messiah. When Pilate, upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing amongst us, had condemned him to be crucified, those who had in the first place come to love him did not give up their affection for him. On the third day he appeared to them restored to life, for the prophets of God had prophesied these and countless other marvelous things about him. And the tribe of the Christians, so they are called after him, has still to this day not disappeared.” *Loeb Classical Library*. Josephus. *Jewish Antiquities XVIII*, 63-64.

hand, from what we know about the man Flavius Josephus, it is doubtful he would have written it because he was not a believer in Jesus.¹²⁰ Another point is that this text still exists because the Christian church is actually responsible for copying and preserving the text, and probably added a bit to *further explain* what Josephus wrote. This and other arguments have led many scholars to believe that Josephus did indeed write about Jesus but without the overtly Christian details that are added.¹²¹ A paired down version of this text has been suggested by Ehrman and also another by F.F. Bruce. However, even with a paired down version of Josephus' statement it can still be shown that Josephus was aware that Jesus was considered by some to be the Messiah, he was executed by Pilate, and that after his death his followers continued to stay loyal to him.

In summary, it is known by historical documentation that Jesus Christ existed. Some people before his execution considered him to be Messiah. Jesus was executed by Pontius Pilate in Judea during the reign of Tiberius. Finally, *after* his execution followers of Christ organized themselves into a group whose expansion began to cause issues for the Roman Empire. One emperor had them expelled from

¹²⁰ *Loeb Classical Library, Josephus Vol. 9 Jewish Antiquities Books XVIII – XX, 49.*

¹²¹ Ehrman, 57-66.

¹²² This is Ehrman's version: "At this time there appeared Jesus, a wise man. He was a doer of startling deeds, a teacher of people who receive the truth with pleasure. And he gained a following both among many Jews and among many of Greek origin. When Pilate, because of an accusation made by leading men among us, condemned him to the cross, those who had loved him previously did not cease to do so. And up until this very day the tribe of Christians, named after him, has not died out." Ehrman, 61. F.F. Bruce gives another possibility for what the original text might have looked like. Bruce's version does not merely extract the "Christian" statements in the passage but also theorizes that other offending statements might have been removed by later editors. Bruce's version is as follows: "Now there arose about this time a source of further trouble in one Jesus, a wise man who performed surprising works, a teacher of men who gladly welcome strange things. He led away many Jews, and also many of the Gentiles. He was the so-called Christ. When Pilate, acting on information supplied by the Chief men among us, condemned him to the cross, those who had attached themselves to him at first did not cease to cause trouble, and the tribe of Christians, which has taken this name from him, is not extinct even today." Bruce. *Jesus & Christian Origins Outside the New Testament*, 39.

Rome. Other emperors adopted a policy of executing anyone who professed and would not deny faith in Jesus Christ. These facts raise a serious historical question. Before addressing this question, it is necessary to examine the state of Jesus' closest followers after his death.

To understand the general state of the disciples after the death of Jesus it is necessary to look at specific details within the Gospel narratives. For starters, the Gospel of Matthew tells of Peter, who had previously claimed that he would never deny Jesus, doing just that.¹²³ Peter's is the only out-right denial mentioned in the Gospels. After the arrest of Jesus the rest of the disciples are nowhere to be found, except Peter in the courtyard. Of all of the people coming forward to offer testimony none of the disciples came to his defense. The disciples are scattered and unwilling to even claim knowledge of Jesus. From the Gospel of Luke, we see the women coming from the tomb to tell the disciples the good news of the resurrection.¹²⁴ The disciples did not believe them! Even though Jesus had told the disciples many times that he would rise from the dead,¹²⁵ none of them believed it would actually happen. They did not believe the testimony of these women. They were not waiting for or expecting a resurrection anytime soon. In another passage, Luke writes of two disciples walking along a road to Emmaus.¹²⁶ In their conversation

¹²³ Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a servant-girl came to him and said, "You too were with Jesus the Galilean." ⁷⁰ But he denied it before them all, saying, "I do not know what you are talking about."

⁷¹ When he had gone out to the gateway, another servant-girl saw him and said to those who were there, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth." ⁷² And again he denied it with an oath, "I do not know the man" (Matt. 26:69-72 NASB).

¹²⁴ Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James; also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles. ¹¹ But these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them (Luke 24:10-11 NASB).

¹²⁵ Matthew 16:21, 17:23, 20:19, 27:63; Mark 8:31, 9:31, 10:34; Luke 9:22, 18:33, 24:7, 46; John 11:25, 20:9

¹²⁶ "But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened."

²² But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, ²³ and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive (Lk. 24:21-23 NASB).

with a stranger (Jesus himself whom they did not recognize), they tell the stranger that they were hoping Jesus would redeem Israel. They were, as in past tense, hoping. The disciples had no hope that Jesus would be able to do anything more for them. He was dead. In a final passage from the Gospel of John, the disciples are in a room and the doors were shut ... for fear of the Jews.¹²⁷ The word shut here actually has a further meaning — barred or locked.¹²⁸

After the death of Jesus, the disciples were scattered and unwilling to acknowledge their relationship with Jesus. They were not looking for Jesus to rise from the grave nor did they believe that he would. All of their hopes for Jesus being the Messiah died with him. They were without hope and hiding in fear for their lives.

Let's come back to the historical question mentioned earlier. Simply put: *What happened?* What is the historical connection between a group of scattered and hopelessly afraid disciples and a Church whose growth came to threaten and eventually conquer one of the largest empires the world has ever seen? What event transformed these disciples into bold and fearless (to the point of death) preachers? What was it about their message that spread across the Roman roads defying all attempts to stop it? What happened?!

This discussion will now turn toward some early church writings which are not part of the New Testament canon.¹²⁹ In the "First Epistle of Clement," which was held in high regard by Chris-

¹²⁷ So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you" (John 20:19 NASB). Note also that the "Jews" mentioned in the passage, refer to the Jewish religious leaders like the high priest and the Sanhedrin who had condemned Jesus.

¹²⁸ κλεισμένων from κλείω : to prevent passage at an opening, shut, lock, bar. BDAG.

¹²⁹ In this case, the term "early church" is not referring to those people and events in Acts and Paul's letters as many church goers tend to think. Early Church refers to those people who were living in a time close enough to the death of Jesus to have known and been taught by those who knew Jesus, approximately A.D. 30 to 100. For our purposes we will be looking at documents written before or slightly after A.D. 100 by people who would have been born and lived prior to A.D. 100. These are also considered primary source documents.

tians in the latter part of the first century,¹³⁰ the writer discusses not only the resurrection¹³¹ of Jesus Christ but also his second coming.¹³² Clement, in using both the Old and New Testaments speaks to the resurrection of Jesus Christ and also to a future resurrection of those who have put their faith in Jesus. Yet another writer, Ignatius in his letter to the Smyrneans,¹³³ also speaks of the resurrection of Jesus.¹³⁴ He links the resurrection of Jesus with sal-

¹³⁰ This epistle like the Gospels does not mention the author in the text. Ancient Christian tradition attributes the epistle to Clement who is listed by Eusebius as the third bishop of Rome. This distinction, however, does not carry the same meaning as the office of bishop did not have the same prominence when this letter was written (sometime in the last two decades of the first century about the same time frame that the book of Revelation was written). Clement was probably one of several bishops or presbyters overseeing the church in Rome, Clement possibly being one of the more prominent ones. This epistle was held in such high regard by the early church that it was even sometimes bound together with early copies of the New Testament and quoted from by other early church leaders. Michael Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers in English* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 36-40.

¹³¹ "Let us consider, beloved, how the Lord continually proves to us that there shall be a future resurrection, of which He has rendered the Lord Jesus Christ the first-fruits by raising Him from the dead." *The First Epistle of Clement. XXIV (The Ante-Nicene Fathers)*

¹³² "Of a truth, soon and suddenly shall His will be accomplished, as the Scripture also bears witness, saying, "Speedily will He come, and will not tarry;" and "The Lord shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Holy One, for whom ye look." *The First Epistle of Clement XXIII (The Ante-Nicene Fathers)*

¹³³ What we know of Ignatius the bishop of Antioch is that he wrote several letters to various churches while on his way to be martyred in Rome. His letters, which were probably written between A.D. 98 and 117 during the reign of Trajan, have an interesting view of martyrdom. Ignatius equates real discipleship with martyrdom. Holmes, 87-94.

¹³⁴ "For I know that after His resurrection also He was still possessed of flesh, and I believe that He is so now. When for instance, He came to those who were with Peter, He said to them 'Lay hold, handle me, and see that I am not an incorporeal spirit.' And immediately they touched Him and believed, being convinced both by His flesh and spirit. For this cause also they despised death, and were found its conquerors. And after His resurrection He did eat and drink with them, as being possessed of flesh, although He was united to the Father." *Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrneans III (Ante-Nicene Fathers)*

vation.¹³⁵ Ignatius makes a point to show that Jesus was raised with a physical body. Jesus died and was raised as flesh and blood as well as being one with God. Ignatius argued that by the resurrection of Jesus Christ those who had faith in him would become conquerors of death along with Jesus. In another letter to the Trallians Ignatius describes the details of Jesus' death and resurrection and adds that, apart from Jesus, one does not possess true life.¹³⁶ Ignatius, like Clement, believed that Jesus rose from the dead and because of his resurrection, those who put their faith in Jesus Christ would also have their part in the resurrection of Jesus. Finally, in his letter to the Philippians, Polycarp¹³⁷ also mentioned the resurrection of Jesus Christ.¹³⁸ Polycarp, like

¹³⁵ "Now, He suffered all these things for our sakes, that we might be saved. And He suffered truly, even as also He truly raised up Himself, not, as certain unbelievers maintain, that He only seemed to suffer, as they themselves only seem to be [Christians]." *Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrneans II (Ante-Nicene Fathers)*

¹³⁶ "Stop your ears, therefore, when anyone speaks to you with variance with Jesus Christ, who was descended from David, and was also of Mary; who was truly born, and did eat and drink. He was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate; He was truly crucified, and [truly] died, in the sight of beings in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth. He was also truly raised from the dead, His father quickening Him, even as after the same manner His father will so raise up us who believe in Him by Christ Jesus, apart from whom we do not possess the true life." *Epistle of Ignatius to the Trallians. IX (Ante-Nicene Fathers)*

¹³⁷ Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, died a martyr's death at the age of 86. His life and ministry spanned the time between the deaths of the apostles and the organizational structure that became the early "catholic" church. He was influential in leading the church through many of the difficulties of that period such as persecution and even in the formation of the New Testament canon. This letter to the Philippians was probably written within a few weeks or months of the writing of the letters from Ignatius (A.D. 98-117) (Holmes, 130-133).

¹³⁸ "I have greatly rejoiced with you in our Lord Jesus Christ, because ye have followed the example of true love [as displayed by God], and have accompanied, as became you, those who were bound in chains, the fitting ornaments of saints, and which are indeed the diadems of the true elect of God and our Lord; and because the strong root of your faith, spoken of in the days long gone by, endureth even until now, and bringeth forth fruit to our Lord Jesus Christ, who for our sins suffered even unto death, [but] 'whom God raised from the dead, having loosed the bands of the grave.' 'In whom, though now ye see Him not, ye believe, and believing, rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory;' in which joy many desire to enter, knowing that 'by grace ye are saved, not of works,' but by the will of God through Christ Jesus." *The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians, I (Ante-Nicene Fathers)*

Ignatius, died a martyr's death,¹³⁹ believed that Christ had indeed been raised from the dead. Not only that, but through his death and resurrection, Christian believers receive salvation and have nothing to fear from death.

Christians in the later part of the first century believed that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was a real historical event. It was this belief and their faith in a future resurrection through Jesus Christ that spurred many to willingly suffer and die at the hands of the Romans. They believed in this so strongly that when given a choice to deny Christ and live, they could not deny what they believed to be true.

Where did the early church get this belief in the resurrection of Christ? Looking at what is known about these authors can shed some light on this question. Clement's first epistle was bound together with copies of the New Testament and even quoted as authoritative.¹⁴⁰ Although not much is known about Ignatius, his epistles show that he is familiar with the Gospels, Paul's epistles, and other books from the New Testament. Polycarp, who lived to the age of 86 before he was martyred, was actually said to have been taught by the apostle John and knew others who had seen Jesus.¹⁴¹ He also quoted from the Gospels and other books in the New Testament.

¹³⁹ "So the proconsul said: 'I have wild beasts; I will throw you to them, unless you change your mind.' But he said, 'Call for them! For the repentance from better to worse is a change impossible for us; but it is a noble thing to change from what is evil to righteousness.' Then he said to him again: 'I will have you consumed by fire, since you despise the wild beasts, unless you change your mind.' But Polycarp said: 'You threaten with fire that burns only briefly and after just a while is extinguished, for you are ignorant of the fire of the coming judgment and eternal punishment, which is reserved for the ungodly. But why do you delay? Come, do what you wish.'" *Martyrdom of Polycarp. XI* (Holmes, 151).

¹⁴⁰ Holmes notes that this letter is one of the earliest Christian documents outside of the New Testament. The epistle was bound together with significant biblical manuscripts. It was quoted by writers in the Early Church and even cited by Clement of Alexandria as Scripture. It was also listed in some early New Testament canons. Also note that attempts have been made to link Clement of Rome with the Clement mentioned by Paul in Philippians 4:3, however there is no evidence to support this (Holmes, 36 – 40).

¹⁴¹ Irenaeus was one of Polycarp's disciples. He mentions Polycarp was "instructed by the apostles and conversed with many who had seen Christ." Irenaeus, *Against Heresies III, III, 4 (Ante-Nicene Fathers)*. See also *Fragments from the Lost Writings of Irenaeus. II (Ante-Nicene Fathers)*.

With various scholars today arguing that the current version of the New Testament is corrupt, note that these second century authors¹⁴² would have had access to the earliest copies of the New Testament.¹⁴³ Their writings show that the writers of the New Testament (the earliest documents in existence speaking of the resurrection) did in fact write that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was and is an actual historical event.

In speaking further of the New Testament text, note that there is more manuscript evidence for the New Testament than any other written work from antiquity. In Greek alone there are about 5,600 manuscripts of the New Testament in existence. Many of those are fragmentary; the average manuscript being about 450 pages long. As far as early manuscripts of the New Testament go, there are 12 manuscripts from the second century, 64 from the third, and 48 from the fourth. Thus, there are 124 manuscripts that were copied within 300 years of the original texts. The same cannot be said for any other ancient writing in existence today. Furthermore, writers from the early church and later periods quoted from the New Testament heavily. From their witness alone, it is possible to reconstruct nearly the entire New Testament. The current translations of the New Testament can say with much more certainty what the original texts would have said than any other work from antiquity.¹⁴⁴

The writers of the New Testament claimed that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was and is a real historical event. The disciples who were closest to Jesus were a group of scared, fearful, deniers of Jesus. Overnight, they became bold followers of Jesus who disregarded their own lives proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. They did this because they believed and would not deny that Jesus physically

¹⁴² *First Clement* was written the first century while Ignatius and Polycarp were writing in the early second century.

¹⁴³ This was prior to the official forming of our current New Testament canon. F.F. Bruce argues that by the year A.D. 177, late in the second century, there was an informal canon of 22 books that were being used as Scripture, which make up almost all of the New Testament as it is known today minus five books. F.F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1988), 170-179.

¹⁴⁴ Daniel Wallace, *Revisiting the Corruption of the New Testament: Manuscripts, Patristics, and Apocryphal Evidence* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic and Professional, 2011), 26 – 31.

walked out of the tomb *after* he had been dead for three days. This belief was passed on to others who took up the cause with equal boldness.

This entire argument rests on these original disciples who followed Jesus throughout his ministry.¹⁴⁵ They listened to him. They learned from him. They saw the amazing things that he did. After Jesus died they gave up all hope in his being the Messiah. Then they went through a remarkable change.¹⁴⁶ The result of this is that thousands of years later people still passionately and boldly proclaim the resurrection of Jesus Christ, because of their testimony passed down from generation to generation.¹⁴⁷

Evans argues that it was not only the resurrection of Jesus that caused the growth of the Christian church. What Jesus taught his disciples gave meaning to his death and resurrection. The appointment of the 12 apostles (minus Judas, plus Matthias) signaled the restoration of Israel. The Church, through their leadership, carried on the mission and ministry that they had been called to. All of this was made possible because they had encountered the risen Jesus Christ.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ The Gospels show that Jesus had 70 disciples of which the 12 apostles made up the core. Luke 10:1-17; Matthew 10:2-5.

¹⁴⁶ “The death of Jesus brought an abrupt halt to his mission and His proclamation of the kingdom of God. Other Jewish prophets and would-be messiahs of late antiquity saw their respective ministries come to sudden and tragic ends. So, in a sense, this was nothing new; it had happened before and would happen again. But the end of Jesus’ ministry, as it turned out, did not last long. The resurrection of Jesus ‘on the third day’ after His crucifixion reignited His mission and launched, or perhaps I should say ‘relaunched,’ his community.” Craig Evans, *From Jesus to the Church: The First Christian Generation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 56.

¹⁴⁷ “Yet it is significant and one of the compelling proofs of the resurrection is that the crucifixion left the disciples in despair and that, hopeless, they were transformed by their experience of the risen Jesus. The resurrection became essential in the faith of subsequent generations of Christians. It meant assurance that because Jesus lived they also would live. Even more was the conviction in Christians that by the resurrection Jesus had been vindicated and had been shown to be the Son of God with power.” Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity Beginnings to 1500 Revised Edition* (Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 2003), 58-59.

¹⁴⁸ Evans, 56-61.

Examining accounts in the New Testament can rule out several possible objections that have been raised to the resurrection. Did the disciples lie or make up the whole story? The culture in which the New Testament was written, Jewish and otherwise, did not have a high regard for the testimony of women. If the early Christians were going to invent the resurrection, even for a non-Jewish audience, they would not have chosen women as the first witnesses because that would have made the story less credible to the original audience.¹⁴⁹ The culture of the Greco-Roman world also negates this objection because of the focus on the physicality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.¹⁵⁰ Did Jesus simply faint or swoon and then recover later? The very nature of this question shows a lack of understanding of the nature of crucifixion.¹⁵¹ Was the tomb actually empty? It would have been impossible for the disciples to convince people of the resurrection of Jesus Christ had there actually still been a body in the tomb.¹⁵² Could the appearances of Jesus after his death been mass hallucinations or visions? It has been argued that New Testament writers citing living witnesses to the physically resurrected Jesus negates the mass hallucination theory. It could not have been a mass hallucination if it can be demonstrated that people encountered a living physical person. Note also that accounts of

¹⁴⁹ Craig Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL:IVP Academic, 1993), 130, 256, 316.

¹⁵⁰ Ben Witherington argues that the Gentile culture of the day did not have an understanding of the afterlife that involved any physicality at all, very much the opposite. It makes no sense to argue that the Christians invented the resurrection story to attract Gentile converts. Gentiles, as shown in Acts 17, would be more likely to reject the Christian faith because of the focus on the resurrection of Jesus. Ben Witherington III, *New Testament History A Narrative Account* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 165.

¹⁵¹ “The skeptic’s proposal that Jesus had only swooned and then recovered would not explain how He could have loosed the strips tied around Him or escaped a sealed tomb, but it also ignores the nature of crucifixion: Josephus had three friends of his taken down alive from a cross, but two of them died despite medical attention because their bodies had become so weakened from the crucifixion” (Keener, 316).

¹⁵² Keener notes that the religious leaders tried to explain the empty tomb in bribing the guards, but they never deny that the tomb is in fact empty. Keener goes on to argue that even though ancient evidentiary laws differ from modern ones, no one would have staked their lives on a report without actually examining the tomb first. Keener, 130, 315.

other historical events are often accepted as fact with far less documented evidence than we have presented in the New Testament.¹⁵³ The disciple's reaction to the women's testimony of visions of angels show that no mere visions alone would have been enough to affect the change that took place within the disciples.¹⁵⁴ The historical accounts presented in the New Testament are capable of standing in the face of historical scrutiny.

All of the evidence that can be historically documented points to the only logical explanation. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a historical fact.¹⁵⁵ The historical evidence of Jesus' life combined with the early church witnesses show that the accounts in the New Testament are historically reliable. Jesus existed, he was believed by some to be the Messiah, he was executed by Pilate, and three days after his death his followers believed that he was raised from the dead. After logically eliminating the objections to the resurrection, the only possible conclusion is that Jesus physically walked out of the grave alive.

¹⁵³ "Paul's purpose in appealing to witnesses still alive (1 Cor. 15:6) is to invite his reader to check his facts if they doubt his words. We may safely rule out the suggestion that the resurrection appearances were mass hallucinations, because such a mass hallucination of a demonstrably physical person is unparalleled in history. Were this evidence being cited for a war, about which we often take the word of a single ancient author, or any other event in history, no one today would think to deny it; that some regard this evidence as insufficient proof of the resurrection's historicity may indicate more about their own presuppositions concerning the existence or activity of God or His vindication of Jesus." Keener, 485. Witherington also notes that the appearances of Jesus after the resurrection happened at different times, in different places, to different people. Hallucinations are not contagious (Witherington, 166).

¹⁵⁴ Witherington notes that the hearing of the women's testimony still left the disciples in a state of unbelief, hopeless to any further chances of Jesus being the messiah. He further argues that visions and even an empty tomb would not have been enough to cause any change in the disciples. The only thing that could cause such a transformation in the disciples was an encounter with a risen Jesus Christ (Witherington, 164).

¹⁵⁵ "Thus, a consistent witness to Jesus' resurrection runs throughout our sources, and this provides prima facie evidence that Jesus' resurrection and appearances provide the key historical middle terms between the life and death of Jesus and the birth of the early church" (Witherington, 170).

On this point, N.T. Wright argues that unlike Gentile culture, the Jewish worldview did hold a belief in a resurrection. The Jewish understanding of the resurrection was of a final resurrection on the last day. Prior to Jesus the concept of resurrection was not connected with the Messiah or any one individual person. In the first century other messianic movements came and went. They ended with the death of the person the movement was centered around, or the movement simply found another messiah. People in the first century had a clear understanding (as do people in the modern world) that dead people do not come back from the dead. When Jesus died on the cross that was the end of his messianic movement. No one expected that he would rise from the dead. They had no Old Testament Scripture in mind to convince themselves that it would happen. Whenever a messianic hopeful died there was no further reason to continue believing in that person any longer. After Jesus' death no one would have continued to say or believe that he was or is the Messiah, unless something entirely remarkable happened. Not only was there an empty tomb, there were people who saw and verified that the physical person of Jesus appeared to his disciples three days after his death on the cross. The only reasonable bridge between these two facts is the true resurrection of Jesus Christ.¹⁵⁶

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ was and is a real historical event and forms the basis for the historically transmitted Christian faith; as the writer of the "Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus" aptly puts it.

Do you not see them exposed to wild beasts, that they may be persuaded to deny the Lord, and yet not overcome? Do you not see that the more of them are punished, the greater becomes the number of the rest? This does not seem to be the work of man: this is the power of God; these are the evidences of His manifestation.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ N.T. Wright, *The Surprise of the Resurrection*. From: Evans, Craig, and Wright, ed. Troy Miller, *Jesus, the Final Days* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 75-107.

¹⁵⁷ *The Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus*. VII (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*)

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THE HOLY SPIRIT AND HIS MINISTRIES

by Rev. Jefferson Vann

His Ministry of Guidance

Jesus described the Holy Spirit's ministry in some detail. He said "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you."¹⁵⁸ That description of the Holy Spirit's ministry suggests a number of principles that help believers understand whether a word or thought is from him:

1. He is the Spirit of truth. No teaching or action or policy that involves deception or false implications is of the Holy Spirit. By contrast, any teaching or action or policy that champions and celebrates truth might possibly be from the Holy Spirit. One has to be careful, because the adversary is quite capable of using many truths to hide his lies. However, truthfulness and honesty in ministry is a telling sign of the Holy Spirit's guidance.

¹⁵⁸ John 16:13-14.

2. His purpose is to guide the church into all the truth. He is not simply one to champion or reveal a part of the truth, and let believers go on living with lies and half-truths in other areas of their lives. His veracity is comprehensive. His goal is to help believers understand and communicate the whole counsel of God.

3. The Holy Spirit acts as an emissary. He is an agent of Jesus Christ, delivering Christ's counsel, and forwarding Christ's commands. He is not a free agent — which means that he is not given authority to rescind or reinterpret what Jesus said as recorded in the Gospels. Instead, he is responsible to those words. Just as Jesus submitted to the Father in all things, so the Holy Spirit has submitted to Christ's will and words in what he has done. That is his function. He continues the task of making disciples of all nations with all the same rules and policies intact.

4. His ultimate goal is to glorify Christ, just as Christ's ultimate goal is to glorify the Father. To glorify someone is to enhance his reputation. For example, I glorify my wife by praising her for what a good wife she is to me. I also glorify her by living a good life and being a good husband and father myself. My actions reflect upon her because we have a relationship. When the Holy Spirit does great things it reflects upon the greatness of Christ.

The Holy Spirit accomplishes all these things (at least partly) by working with and within the church. He guides believers upon the Christ-track. He keeps them from getting off the Christ-track. He exerts influence — the same kind of influence that Christ did as he walked the desert roads of Galilee and Judea.

His Ministry of Discipling

Discipling requires acting in such a way that the way to live is communicated in both words and deeds. Jesus could do that because he could show his disciples how to live, and he could explain to them the principles of God's kingdom. The Holy Spirit can do the same thing — through us. He uses our tongues to speak, and our hands to heal. As a disciple, he continues what Jesus started by using disciples to make new disciples. He reveals God to the unbeliever; explains God to the ignorant, and shows God's love and power to the needy. Just as Jesus was the world's guide to God's new covenant

life, so the Holy Spirit takes up that responsibility — through the church.

Being a disciple takes more than some extra strength from a supernatural power. It involves a lifetime of decisions based on principles that sometimes seem to contradict each other. In those cases, what is needed is not a force that leans the disciple in the right direction. What is needed is a Counselor who can work with the believer to get her to see God's will against a background of several good or bad possibilities.

The NIV translation of the Bible uses the word Counselor to translate the title Jesus uses for the Holy Spirit.¹⁵⁹ A friend of mine objected to the term because it made him think of a staff member of a camp, complete with shorts and a whistle. He argued that the Holy Spirit is more than that. That is true. The Holy Spirit is more than that. Yet, the term is helpful to understand the special role that God's Holy Spirit has in helping disciples be disciples. He is a person who resides in us, and helps us be the kind of people who reflect Christ's glory by doing what Christ wants us to do.

One final question must be introduced at this point. If disciples of Christ are being counseled by the Holy Spirit, why is it that they often say or do the wrong thing? Christians make mistakes, and sometimes intentionally sin. The simplest answer is that Christians have the freedom to reject the Holy Spirit's influence just as those who sat under Christ's discipling ministry did. The guidance of the Holy Spirit is not overwhelming. We are still free to choose our own path even when the Guide is showing us the correct one. If the Holy Spirit were simply an influence from God, it stands to reason that the influence would be effective. But since the Holy Spirit is a person, everyone who hears his voice has the option to heed it or reject it. When Christians fail their heavenly Father it is because they choose to ignore the counsel of the Counselor. We always live to regret those choices.

His Ministry of Empowerment

Jesus told his disciples “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another

¹⁵⁹ John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7.

Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.”¹⁶⁰ On the one hand, he gave us an impossible task: keeping his commandments. It is harder to do that than to keep the Old Testament commandments, and no one was able to accomplish that task.

On the other hand, we have help that the Old Testament saints did not have. Jesus personally asked the Father to send someone to help us live the life Jesus commanded us to live, and that someone is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit continues the discipling work that Christ began. He was sent specifically from heaven to carry on Christ's work. The best way to understand this aspect of the Holy Spirit's ministry is to see how Jesus Christ disciplined.

Jesus empowered his disciples to do what he called them to do. When he commissioned the Twelve for itinerant ministry, he “called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.”¹⁶¹ He did not ask them to do what he had not demonstrated for them, and given them the means to do so. When he had trained and commissioned another group — the seventy — he likewise assured them that they had the power to do what he asked. He told them, “Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you.”¹⁶² With the task came the empowerment.

Some teach that Jesus has somehow short-changed us during this age. They seem to feel that now discipling can be carried out without supernatural power to heal and deliver from demonic bondage. There is no indication of such a paradigm shift in the New Testament. Just before ascending to heaven, Jesus told the believers present with him that “I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was tied to two things: The physical absence of Jesus Christ in bodily form, and the need to disciple all nations before his return. Neither of these two factors have changed in the past two thousand years.

¹⁶⁰ John 14:15-17.

¹⁶¹ Luke 9:1-2.

¹⁶² Luke 10:19.

His Ministry of Reflection

If the Holy Spirit were a mere influence, it would not matter so much what our inner character was, as long as we succumbed to that influence. But the Holy Spirit is a person, sent not only to move us a certain direction, but walk alongside us as we tread that path. He is a friend who goes with us as we go about our daily lives. Just as any other friend would be, he is affected by what we do and say. He reflects our relationship with the Father. When we were unbelievers — without hope and without God in this world — his connection to us reflected that lack of relationship.

resisting him

The unbeliever is born into this world with a natural disposition to resist the Holy Spirit's influence. Although God continues to show evidence of his existence by what he has made, the unbeliever fails to see it. Stephen criticized his fellow Jews who were bombarded with evidence of God's work in their lives, but "always resist the Holy Spirit."¹⁶³

To the saved, a tree is a marvel of complex design, enabling the production of oxygen, the provision for a habitat for people and animals, the cleaning of pollution from the air, the raw material for numerous products that enhance the quality of life, and a beautiful, majestic thing to look at. All these things and more are gifts from God, who created trees for our enjoyment and benefit.

To the unsaved, it is usually just a tree. That may be a simplification, but it demonstrates how differently the saved and unsaved react to the world around them. The difference is partly the fact that although all humanity was created with an appreciation for the world around us, believers have special access to God's Holy Spirit. We are able to tap into that capacity for appreciation that otherwise might lie dormant. Our ears are open so that when God talks, we listen. Our eyes are adjusting to the brightness of his presence. It is as if we have muscles to use that unbelievers do not have.

Having these muscles is no guarantee that we will always use them. Christians are under divine obligation to resist the devil and

¹⁶³ John 16:13-14.

to consciously surrender to the Holy Spirit, but we sometimes do the reverse. Often we find ourselves giving in to Satan's temptations, but failing to listen and respond to the Holy Spirit's promptings. We always have the capacity to use our spiritual muscles and walk away from sin, but we often take the easy way and give in to sin instead.

But the Holy Spirit does not simply prompt us to avoid sin. There is a whole world of holiness and creativity and things that bring glory to the Father. He wants us to experience all the treasures of that world, and is ready to take us by the hand and give us a guided tour. But we resist the Holy Spirit here, too. There are many reasons that we resist his promptings toward miraculous living. Among them:

1. We are creatures of habit. Having lived our lives on a certain level, following a certain path, we are not inclined to stray from that path.

2. We fear the unknown. The unknown is just where the Holy Spirit wants to take us.

3. We identify mostly with others who are not likely to surrender to the truly adventurous life the Holy Spirit can offer. We fear the loss of their approval if we take up the challenge of the Holy Spirit's promptings.

4. We too easily swallow the Enemy's lies about ourselves. Satan tells us that we are so tied to the sins and failures and lusts of this life that God cannot make us different than we are.

There is no foundation for this lack of faith. Not one believer — no matter what his history — is tied to a life of mediocrity. We all have the potential to be much more than we allow ourselves to be. The call to break the habit of resisting the Holy Spirit is a challenge to us all.

quenching him

Most of us have seen or have otherwise experienced some special miracle where the Holy Spirit has manifested. Perhaps while hearing a sermon, or some teaching of the Bible, at some point a special message from the Spirit himself touches the heart. At that point one realizes that God is speaking directly to him through the

human speaker. Or, perhaps that special message comes through the words of a song or a prayer. Sometimes the Spirit touches the heart through an act of kindness, or ministry that meets a need nobody was supposed to know about.

Our public worship services are times when such Holy Spirit manifestations should be common. Unfortunately, we sometimes sit through entire services that seem as dry as a desert. Collectively, the body is suppressing the activity of the Spirit. It is like a spiritual coma.

Paul warned the Thessalonians not to “quench the Spirit.”¹⁶⁴ The imagery is that of a fire, which, if allowed to grow, will do what fire does — burn. To quench the Holy Spirit is to put his fire out. That implies that there are times when the Holy Spirit wants to accomplish something, yet his revealed intention is stopped by the indifference or opposition of believers. Paul does not specify what type of ministry it is that can be potentially hindered. The implication is that many different types of ministry can be quenched.

Perhaps 1 Thessalonians 5:20, where Paul tells the same church not to “despise prophecies,” is a particular example of the general rule against quenching the Spirit. There are some times when the Holy Spirit would want to share a prophetic word from God in a gathering, but some believers present are not willing to accept that ministry.

To quench the Spirit is a dangerous thing. It takes resisting to a whole new level. The Holy Spirit is a gentleman. If he encounters those who are not willing to accept his manifestations, he will often withhold them. Sometimes all it takes to encourage an entire body of believers to quench the Spirit is the fear of being labeled charismatic.

grieving him

Paul told the Ephesians that they had the opportunity to put off their old selves and put on the new selves “created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.”¹⁶⁵ He was talking about the Spirit’s role as a sanctifier, one who changes us into who we were meant to be. Yet, he warned the Ephesians that they can resist that

¹⁶⁴ 1 Thessalonians 5:19.

¹⁶⁵ Ephesians 4:22, 24.

transformation. He charged them not to “grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”¹⁶⁶

Living an unholy life when we were called to holiness breaks the Holy Spirit’s heart. It prevents the transformation. Our lives are like containers. They can hold holy things or unholy things, but we were not designed to hold both at the same time. We are temples, designed to house the celebration of God’s holiness. If those temples become defiled — the worship ceases. The celebration stops. The Holy Spirit mourns the quiet.

Defilement does not always manifest publically. A secret sin can shut down the celebration just as quickly as a public spectacle. What is taking place is a personal tragedy for the Holy Spirit himself. Paul implies that a church could remain doctrinally sound but still cause grief to the Holy Spirit who taught them their orthodox beliefs. All it takes is living like there is no God. If a church chooses to turn its back on the transformation the Holy Spirit offers, heaven turns quiet for them. That is the sound of the Holy Spirit grieving.

blaspheming him

There is only one sin against the Holy Spirit that Jesus deems irreversible and unpardonable. That is the sin of blaspheming him.¹⁶⁷ To do this is to set oneself against what God is doing and wants to do. It is to declare oneself in opposition to God’s will. It is more than simply resisting his call, and more than merely grieving or quenching his fire. Blaspheming the Holy Spirit is purposely seeking to malign God’s name and oppose what he wants.

The Christian who consciously seeks to please God and seeks forgiveness for those aspects of her life that are not pleasing to him will never be in danger of blaspheming the Holy Spirit. Christian believers are much more likely to grieve the Holy Spirit by unconfessed sin, or to quench him when he wants to manifest.

It is unbelievers who consciously resist the promptings of the Holy Spirit — who are in danger of carrying that resistance to the point of blasphemy.

¹⁶⁶ Ephesians 4:30.

¹⁶⁷ Matthew 12:31.

His Ministry of Giving

The Holy Spirit is the primary equipper for the body of Christ. He gives gifts to each member of the body so that we can utilize those gifts to minister to the world, and to each other in the name of Christ. Pentecost initiated that process. The apostle Peter explained how the gifting first experienced at Pentecost is still present in the lives of the church.

“The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies — in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”¹⁶⁸

each has received a gift

He describes believers as not only recipients of God’s grace, but also as stewards of it. The Holy Spirit so distributes his gifting that no one person in a given fellowship has a monopoly. Each has a purpose because each has been gifted. Each fits into the plan of God because each contributes toward fulfilling that plan.

use it to serve one another

One of the most significant reasons that we have been gifted is that God the Holy Spirit wants to love us through each other. Peter tells the church that he is writing so that they are to “keep loving one another earnestly.” By exercising our spiritual gifts, we have the opportunity to show love to one another. The spiritual gifts were not gifts that we are intended to use up on ourselves. Rather, we are intended to use those gifts as a service to one another.

¹⁶⁸ 1 Peter 4:7-11.

whoever speaks

Peter simplifies the whole matter of spiritual gifts by dividing all the possible gifts into two categories. He first mentions the category of speaking gifts because he is well known for his sermons. Peter had the spiritual gift of apostleship, among others. Apostleship is a speaking gift where the Holy Spirit uses the believer to proclaim his word in a new and different environment. Apostles cross cultural barriers to proclaim the gospel.

There are other speaking gifts mentioned in the New Testament as well. Among the most obvious are evangelism,¹⁶⁹ prophecy,¹⁷⁰ messages in other tongues with their interpretation,¹⁷¹ and teaching.¹⁷² Peter's instruction here is that no matter what you say as a representative of God's kingdom, assume that you are pronouncing "oracles of God." Even if you cannot precisely place what you are led to say into the exact ministry of a particular spiritual gift mentioned in Scripture, let the Holy Spirit use you anyway. This is helpful advice because believers often use "I don't have that gift" as an excuse. Peter would have none of that. He encourages a broader understanding of how the Holy Spirit operates using the gifts.

whoever serves

Peter's second major category is that of gifts of service, which is so broad it just about covers anything anyone does in service to Christ and his kingdom. It basically includes any spiritual gift that cannot be specifically described as a speaking gift. His instruction is similar to that he gave in reference to the speaking gifts. He says that if you set out to do anything in the name of Christ, assume that the Holy Spirit will give you the strength to do it.

¹⁶⁹ Acts 21:8; Ephesians 4:11; 2 Timothy 4:5.

¹⁷⁰ Luke 2:36; Acts 11:27; 13:1; 15:32; 21:10; 1 Corinthians 12:28-29; 13:2; 14:29, 32; Ephesians 3:5; 4:11.

¹⁷¹ 1 Corinthians 12:30; 14:13, 27-28.

¹⁷² Acts 2:42; 4:2, 18; 5:28; 13:1; 28:31; Romans 12:7; 1 Corinthians 4:17; 12:28-29; 14:6; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Timothy 2:7; 3:2; 4:11, 13; 5:17; 6:2; 2 Timothy 1:11; 2:2, 24; Titus 2:1.

This category obviously includes the more spectacular gifts of service, like healing,¹⁷³ and miracle working faith.¹⁷⁴ But it also includes the more mundane, but equally important gifts of service, like generous giving, leadership and cheerful acts of mercy.¹⁷⁵ Wherever we can serve, God's Holy Spirit can serve us, and can serve others through us.

that in everything God may be glorified

One of the major reasons for this outpouring of spiritual energy and power is that through the spiritual gifts, God can be glorified. His reputation is enhanced among those who witness the gifts in operation. Peter mentions someone speaking the oracles of God, and the natural assumption is that he refers to some kind of worship service where this is happening. There are many reasons to expect manifestations of the spiritual gifts when we gather as congregations for public worship:

1. The whole body is present.
2. Words are spoken in God's name.
3. Words are sung in God's name.
4. Prayers are offered.
5. Guidance is given.
6. Ministry is encouraged.
7. There is opportunity for giving.

Every element of the formal worship service is an opportunity for God to manifest himself through spiritual gifts. In fact, the first outpouring of spiritual gifts — Pentecost — serves as an example of this fact. About 120 people were all together in one place at the Jerusalem temple courts when all heaven broke loose.¹⁷⁶

However, the gifts are not to be confined to public worship. Indeed, they cannot be. What took place after Pentecost shows this fact. The speaking could not be confined to the temple courts. In-

¹⁷³ Acts 4:9, 14, 22, 30; 5:16; 8:7; 28:8; 1 Corinthians 12:9, 28, 30; James 5:16.

¹⁷⁴ Acts 8:13; 19:11; 1 Corinthians. 12:10, 28-29; Galatians 3:5; Hebrews 2:4.

¹⁷⁵ Romans 12:8.

¹⁷⁶ Acts 1:15; 2:1.

stead, “every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.”¹⁷⁷ Signs and wonders were being demonstrated by both the apostles and others so gifted (like Stephen) “among the people.”¹⁷⁸ The result was that evangelism was being given a helping hand, because the spiritual gifts in operation were proving the veracity of the witnesses. God was being glorified by his people.

be self-controlled and sober-minded

Peter is aware that practicing the spiritual gifts can become something much different than what it was at Pentecost. In the same passage where he encourages the use of spiritual gifts, he commands that believers exercise self-control and sober-mindedness. Spiritual gifts are not child’s play. Their exercise is serious business which calls for maturity.

Paul, speaking on the same subject, encourages believers not to “be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature.”¹⁷⁹ The fruit of the Spirit is self-control.¹⁸⁰ When it is the Holy Spirit speaking, he does not cause confusion and disorder. When it is the Holy Spirit working, he does not scare people, or cause them bodily harm. The Bible encourages the use of the spiritual gifts, but also cautions us against their abuse.

Often people who seek to use their spiritual gifts do so for childish reasons. Childishness says “*This is my spiritual gift and I have a right to express it here and now.*” Maturity says “*Will expressing my spiritual gift serve God’s purpose here and now?*” Paul had gotten word that the Corinthians were showing a childish over-zealous attitude about the gifts. He encouraged them “since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church.”¹⁸¹ Childishness says “*Let’s do this and see what happens,*” but maturity says “*If we are going to do this, let’s do it properly.*” Paul’s advice to the Corinthians was “earnestly desire to prophesy, and do

¹⁷⁷ Acts 5:42.

¹⁷⁸ Acts 2:43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8.

¹⁷⁹ 1 Corinthians 14:20.

¹⁸⁰ Galatians 5:23.

¹⁸¹ 1 Corinthians 14:12.

not forbid speaking in tongues. But all things should be done decently and in order.”¹⁸² Childishness says “*Let’s stir things up*” but maturity says “*Will confusion honor God?*” Paul reminded the Corinthians that “God is not a God of confusion but of peace.”¹⁸³

keep loving one another earnestly

Coming back to Peter’s instructions on spiritual gifts, we find that mutual love is the atmosphere in which the gifts must be operated. Without the right atmosphere, the mechanics will not work right. For this reason, every major text in the Bible that mentions spiritual gifts also emphasizes love. The reason is that the New Testament authors expected believers to keep trying to use their gifts, and they expected us to get it wrong sometime. Mutual love is required “since love covers a multitude of sins.”¹⁸⁴

In fact, 1 Corinthians 13 (the love chapter) comes sandwiched between two chapters on spiritual gifts. The reason Paul spoke about love is that he needed to explain something important about spiritual gifts. He needed to explain that — without mutual love, the speaking gifts are just noise,¹⁸⁵ and the serving gifts are nothing.¹⁸⁶ Love provides the atmosphere of forgiveness that enables imperfect people to minister to imperfect people, covering over the multitude of mistakes that will be made.

show hospitality to one another

God intends to minister to us through the lives of others — but only if we love them enough to let them get close enough. Love creates an atmosphere of hospitality that encourages the sharing of ourselves and our gifts.¹⁸⁷ One of the reasons the New Testament encourages believers to regularly gather together is for mutual en-

¹⁸² 1 Corinthians 14:39-40.

¹⁸³ 1 Corinthians 14:33.

¹⁸⁴ 1 Peter 4:8.

¹⁸⁵ 1 Corinthians 13:1.

¹⁸⁶ 1 Corinthians 13:2.

¹⁸⁷ 1 Peter 4:9.

couragement,¹⁸⁸ and spiritual gifts can help us accomplish this. Or, our worship services can be stiff, formal, and with so little actual personal contact that we might as well stay apart and watch a sermon on television or the internet. The choice is ours.

The apostle Paul gives some systematic instruction on the issue of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12.

you were led astray

He begins by reminding the Corinthians that before they came to Christ they were in the habit of being deceived into believing the wrong things and doing the wrong things. This is an important truth for believers to remember when it comes to the exercise of spiritual gifts. Most of us were at one time gullible fools. We tended to believe what we wanted to believe, and often would not recognize the truth if it slapped us in the face. Then it did. Now, hopefully, we are a bit wiser, and a good deal more cautious.

led astray to mute idols

The Corinthian Christians had been animistic idol worshippers. They had been fooled into following images that could say nothing. They gave no revelation. They were just there. There was no instruction in the right way to go, or warning against the wrong way to go. The Holy Spirit is not like that. The Holy Spirit is going to provide all kinds of instruction and warnings and revelations. He is going to speak through the other believers. In his role as discipler, the Holy Spirit will continue Christ's preaching and teaching ministry, and guide the church into all the truth.¹⁸⁹

speaking in the Spirit of God

Just in case these Corinthians get a little too cautious because they had been burned once by deception, Paul gives them some ways to tell if what they hear is really God speaking through an

¹⁸⁸ Hebrews 10:25.

¹⁸⁹ John 14:16; 16:13.

actual spiritual gift. The Spirit is not going to contradict himself. He has declared that Jesus is Lord, so he will never lead anyone to say that Jesus is accursed. He has breathed out inspired words in the Bible, so he is never going to inspire a believer to deny, take away from, or add to that Scripture.

the same Spirit

When the Corinthians were pagans, they got used to the concept of relativism. One person's god demanded that he eat no meat; another person's god demanded that she not be a glutton. You never could tell what the right thing to do was, because it varied all the time. When they came to Christ, they realized that the God of the Bible is not like that. His ways are altogether righteous, and with him there is no changing like shifting shadows. He can be counted on to always stand for the truth, and that truth never changes. There was something refreshing about that fact that drew the Corinthians to Christ.

True spiritual gifts will manifest that same rock-solid continuity. Paul emphasizes this by using the word *same* so many times. The gifts are the work of the same Spirit,¹⁹⁰ the same Lord,¹⁹¹ and the same God.¹⁹² His gifts are not going to direct us away from his paths. He is going to continue to be consistent with himself. When we are being used by him for his purposes, we are not going to be at cross purposes with him or with each other.

varieties of gifts

There is diversity in the kinds of spiritual gifts, although their function is unified. Their function is unified because behind them all is the same Holy Spirit, doing the same will of the Father, fulfilling the work of the body of Christ. There are varieties of gifts because the work of the body is more than just one work. His work is not confined to only the sermon preached or the worship music

¹⁹⁰ 1 Corinthians 12:4, 8, 9, 11.

¹⁹¹ 1 Corinthians 12:5.

¹⁹² 1 Corinthians 12:6.

or the children's class. He is doing it all through the various gifts he has distributed throughout the body.

varieties of service (ministries)

Peter had divided the gifts into two categories: speaking and serving gifts. Paul uses another kind of classification. He talks about varieties of service, and varieties of activities. Perhaps a better translation of the Greek for *service* here would be ministry. What Paul describes here are all the gifts that the Holy Spirit imparts to believers, which they regularly and consistently manifest as part of their ministry. These are the gifts associated with the Holy Spirit's call to a certain ministry. It is not uncommon for an individual with a ministry gift to keep exercising that gift for a lifetime.

Some Speaking Gifts that are often considered Ministries

- 1) Apostles — gifts enabling people to do cross-cultural ministry.
- 2) Prophets — gifts enabling people to speak for God.
- 3) Teachers — gifts enabling people to systematically train others in doctrine and ministry skills.
- 4) Tongues and interpretation — gifts enabling people to effectively communicate in languages other than their heart language.

Some Serving Gifts that are often considered Ministries

- 1) Miracles — gifts enabling people to perform extraordinary acts.
- 2) Healings — gifts enabling people to restore the health of those who are ill or injured.
- 3) Helps — gifts enabling people to render faithful service to others.
- 4) Administrations — gifts enabling people to manage the affairs of the Church with efficiency.

These appear to be what Paul referred to as the “higher gifts.” He encouraged the Corinthians to earnestly desire these gifts because through them the believers would consistently serve each other and their community. Without love, even these ministries could be abused, but when the ministries are performed in a loving way, they accomplish what the Holy Spirit wants.

varieties of activities (manifestations)

Paul's second category is *activities*. This word probably refers to the times when the Holy Spirit works among us in ways that we do not expect. Since he is sovereign over the spiritual gifts, he is free to zap me with a gift I have never experienced before, and might not ever experience again. He may use me to heal someone, but that does not mean I should quit my writing and set up a healing ministry. This kind of gift is a *manifestation*. It is something the Holy Spirit does among us, and through us, but it is less permanent because it is not associated with a lifetime call.

Any of the ministry gifts may also appear as a one-time manifestation. Believers should be careful not to assume a calling simply because God used them once in a particular way. The beauty of the manifestation gifts is that believers cannot rule out the Holy Spirit using them in a speaking gift, when their ministries are usually serving gifts, and vice-versa.

the body of Christ

The predominate metaphor that Paul used to explain spiritual gifts is that of a body — the body of Christ, with each believer being a member (a limb or organ) in that body. The metaphor emphasizes the concepts of the Holy Spirit's unity amidst the church's diversity. It also implies another teaching that Paul stressed: we need each other. Paul asked "If all were a single member, where would the body be?"¹⁹³ It takes all of the limbs and organs for the body to function properly. For that reason, people in prominent ministries should not act as if they were the whole church.

What, then, is the role of those the Holy Spirit calls into life-long ministry? Paul deals with that question when he writes about spiritual gifts to the Ephesians (4:11–16). Here, Paul stresses some of the same principles that he had taught the Corinthians about the spiritual gifts. To emphasize unity, instead of speaking of the one Spirit, he focuses on the one head. Since Christ is the head, our goal in ministry should be to get all the members to grow up into him.

¹⁹³ 1 Corinthians 12:19.

That stresses maturity as well as unity. Paul also mentions a variety of ministry gifts, not just one. We need each other. The Holy Spirit uses many to minister to all the saints, and the work of ministry belongs to all the saints.

Spiritual gifts used properly produce spiritual growth. The body functions properly as it continues to grow. The measure of that growth is not how I compare with the other limbs and organs of the body. The measure is Christ. Healthy living and proper use of spiritual gifts means that the church will “grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.”¹⁹⁴

His Ministry of Sanctification

One of the reasons the third person of the trinity is called the Holy Spirit is that he is the one who works within the lives of true believers to produce Christian character. He challenges their assumptions about what righteousness is. He forces them to come to grips with their need for godliness, and walks them through the slow process that eventually produces that godliness.

Galatian troublers

The apostle Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians because the churches of Galatia had missed this. They had been deceived into believing that they could handle their own sanctification. Paul saw this not as simple stubbornness or self-reliance, but as desertion. He told them that he was “astonished that (they) are so quickly deserting him who called (them) in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel.”¹⁹⁵

The gospel is the good news of what God has done and can do for believers. God the Father loved them while they were yet sinners, and sent his Son to die in their place, giving them the chance to become members of his family. The Holy Spirit regenerates their hearts so that they **want** to serve God again, and transforms their minds so that they can accomplish what they want to do. He is the Spirit of holiness, the sanctifying Spirit.

¹⁹⁴ Ephesians 4:15.

¹⁹⁵ Galatians 1:6.

The troublers came to the Galatian region teaching that people do not need the grace of God working supernaturally in them to do what God requires — they only need to follow the commands of the law. Paul aggressively attacks that heresy in his letter. He calls it a different gospel, and he places God’s curse upon its proponents.¹⁹⁶ The idea that one can simply make his mind up to be good and follow the ways of God without the prime moving being done by God himself is dangerous. It does not work that way. This is the message Paul gets across in Galatians.

how it works

Sanctification is an act of the Holy Spirit, who takes the believer’s willingness to submit to him and his grace, and turns it into manifestations of God’s character. The metaphor that Paul uses in Galatians to describe this process is that of growing fruit. The metaphor suggests some important facts every Christian should know about sanctification:

1. Fruit growing is a *long process*.
2. There are no real substitutes, but *there are plenty of imitations*.
3. Fruit growing *is not easy*.

The gospel of godliness is also a gospel of grace. It shows to the world that every soul that can respond to God’s touch can become a godly soul. It is the Holy Spirit who has the green thumb of sanctification. To suggest that my life is not capable of learning and manifesting godliness is ultimately to criticize him. It is to suggest that there is a work that even he cannot do. One cannot imply such a thing and remain orthodox in one’s theology because it denies the omnipotence of God.

the soil

The believer’s life is the soil in which God’s Holy Spirit plants his revelation of himself. Every social contact, every event one experi-

¹⁹⁶ Galatians 1:9.

ences, every decision one makes comprises that soil. Some soils are predispositioned to accept the Holy Spirit, and others are not.

Jesus' parable of the sower/soils relates to this issue because Jesus was talking about how people respond to the gospel of God's kingdom in their lives. In his parable, he described some soils as:

1. **The Path** — beaten down for walking on. Seeds fall but they cannot permeate into the soil. The birds eat them. The result is no crop.¹⁹⁷
2. **Rocky Ground** — enough soil for immediate growth, but not enough to protect against the scorching sun. The result is no lasting crop.¹⁹⁸
3. **Thorny Ground** — plenty of soil for immediate growth but too many weeds competing for the same nutrients and space. The result is no lasting crop.¹⁹⁹
4. **Good Soil** — prepared so that it can take in the seed, enabling the seed to germinate, and protecting it from competition and harm while it grows. The result is a fruitful crop.

Jesus had been talking about a grain crop, and Paul was using a fruit orchard for his analogy, but they both were essentially describing the same process: the process by which the Holy Spirit works in our lives to produce God's kingdom of holiness. Jesus' explanation of his parable of the sower/soils helps us to understand what the chief hindrances are to growth. In other words, he explains what elements of a person's life make it hard for that person to experience growth toward sanctification.

1. **Lack of Understanding.** Jesus explained that "when anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart."²⁰⁰ Human minds create all kinds of barriers that can keep them from grasping the impulse that the Holy Spirit is revealing. Often what God wants to reveal is obstructed by their lack of awareness of its significance.

¹⁹⁷ Matthew 13:4.

¹⁹⁸ Matthew 13:5-6.

¹⁹⁹ Matthew 13:7.

²⁰⁰ Matthew 13:19.

One of the tasks of evangelists is to learn ways of saying the gospel message so that their listeners are not immediately closed to hearing it. People who come to Christ often respond to the gospel message after hearing it presented a number of times, in various ways. When the time is right, they hear and understand. The Holy Spirit's revelation of himself for the purpose of sanctification works the same way. All too often, believers hear of a change that must be made, but just nod their heads and continue as they were. Then, something happens, and they finally understand not only what change must be made, but also why. Until this happens, believers may accept the fact that change is needed, but still fail to commit to that change.

2. **Lack of Depth.** Jesus explained that some people hear the word and receive it with joy, but fall away at the first sign of tribulation or persecution.²⁰¹ Theirs is a fair weather faith. They have understanding enough to know that the gospel is the answer to their problem of estrangement from God. What they lack is the depth and endurance to hang on to that truth when others start betraying and rejecting them for being faithful to that word.

The same kind of thing can happen in the area of personal sanctification as well. When the Holy Spirit reveals himself to believers, there are always things that the believers must change in order to live up to their newly recognized image of Christ. Their unbelieving friends will not appreciate their new commitments because they are not privy to the revelation.

Even other believers may be offended and seek to hinder them from taking that step. All people resist change, and usually do not appreciate it when our friends change. Cooperating with the Holy Spirit causes interpersonal problems. Some people that the believers thought they could count on to support them in their quest for godliness will desert them.

Growth is change. Spiritual growth puts down roots and enables believers to stay fixed to their faith while all those changes take place. As time progresses, believers become more mature and stable, while still being as faithful and faith-filled as ever. That is depth.

²⁰¹ Matthew 13:21.

- 3. Presence of Distractions.** If the enemy cannot hinder spiritual growth by keeping believers ignorant or by keeping their faith shallow, he will seek to hinder it by keeping them distracted. Jesus summarized the means of the distraction: the “cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches.”²⁰² The tempter uses either their anxiety about problems of the present or their lusts for the possessions of the present. Either way, the enemy seeks to get them to forfeit their eternal rewards by making them concentrate on the now.

Although the Holy Spirit is at work in their lives now, his focus is always on preparing them for a glorified eternity. People come to God just as they are and he accepts them by his mercy. He accepts them just as they are because it is only he who can transform them by his grace. They see their lives as empty fields and wonder how they can ever glorify God with those lives. He sees beyond the empty fields and is already celebrating the abundant harvest. With joy the Holy Spirit superintends the process because he can see beyond the things that distract. They see thorns, he sees thrones.

For believers, to cooperate with the Holy Spirit is to catch a glimpse of what he sees. Believers need to look beyond the thorns — because they will be there until the glorification at Christ’s second coming. They need to see the end product, and realize how significant it is.

Believers are often trapped in a life that is possessed by their *problems* (the cares of this world) or by their desire for *possessions* (the deceitfulness of riches). It is very difficult to concentrate on God and his ways when pain and want and worry keep presenting themselves and demanding attention. The lure of things and experiences is so strongly felt that believers sometimes forget about their desire for godliness. It becomes like a distant dream.

Sanctification reverses that disposition. Believers are still affected by their problems, and still want things. But the lust for life eternal has gained prominence. They want so much to be what they will be that they are more and more willing to set aside the passions of the present in order to grasp their future — their destiny.

²⁰² Matthew 13:22.

The backwards infusion

If believers today were capable of looking through a lens that enabled them to see what they would look like in a million years or so, they would see the fruit of the Spirit. It would not look strange to them. They would see themselves acting quite naturally, and everything they thought and did would be holy. Their lives would be the lives of normal children of God. They would not think it strange that they felt no impulse to steal, or murder or lie. It would not enter their mind to act that way. Those would not be the normal things for them to desire or accomplish. Those actions would not be them.

The Holy Spirit is there in that time, a million or so years from now. He takes that godliness, granted by the grace of God, and brings it back with him to the now. He is infusing believers now with the godliness they will know fully then. As a result, when they love, it is really them loving. The Holy Spirit is not forcing them to go against their will. He is merely allowing them to see the potential they will have for eternity to love as he loves.

They manifest all of the fruit of the Spirit because the fruit are attributes of their spirits. They do not always feel those attributes, because they are not yet where they will be when their glorification is complete. They will, however, grow deeper and deeper into the godliness that is their destiny. Jesus has chosen them to go and bear abiding fruit.²⁰³ The Holy Spirit is the producer who brings all of God's resources to bear in order to make that happen.

This article is an abridgement of chapters 37 – 42 of “An Advent Christian Systematic Theology,” by Advent Christian missionary Jefferson Vann. The e-book is available in Kindle format, and can be purchased online at Amazon.com.

Jeff and his wife, Penny, live in Auckland, New Zealand.

²⁰³ John 15:16.

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ANGELS AND DEMONS
(Looking ahead to issue XLIII/1)
by Rev. Jefferson Vann

- The theme for the next issue will be Angels and Demons, looking at the lesser spirit beings. We are looking for articles and papers that deal with angels and demons and how they interact with us humans.
- If you find anything written on Angelology or Demonology, feel free to review it, pro and/or con.
- Letters to the editor will be read, and will probably be printed, unless they simply say — in a lot of words — that you disagree with something someone else said. But, if you take the time to actually interact with something you have read here, we would love to print that!
- Reviews of Advent Christian or conditionalist writings are always welcomed.
- Any biblical or theological papers (regardless of topic) are also encouraged.

PLEASE SUBMIT ALL LETTERS, ARTICLES OR REVIEWS
BY EMAIL TO jeffersonvann@yahoo.com AND SPECIFY
WHICH ISSUE THE ARTICLE IS INTENDED FOR OR
WHICH ARTICLE THE LETTER IS RESPONDING TO.