

# **BIBLE TRUTHS EXPLAINED**

*What God's Word teaches about*

## **THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

**Gordon Lyons**

**KJV Edition**

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I must acknowledge a genuine debt of gratitude to the work of Dr. Charles Hodge. The writings of this theologian from a previous generation have helped considerably in preparing this work. On a number of occasions—as will be seen when reading these studies—I have cited or alluded to Dr. Hodge's remarks in his three-volume *Systematic Theology*. These references have been acknowledged in the footnotes to the study text.

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## **Author's Note**

The following study on the Doctrine of the Work of the Holy Spirit is the second of two studies on the Holy Spirit. The first study, published separately, deals more particularly with the Deity and Personality of the Holy Spirit. Please consult both documents to appreciate more fully the person and work of God the Holy Spirit

## Part 1

### **Synopsis: The Work of the Holy Spirit**

God the Holy Spirit is the Person of the Trinity through whom God the Father and God the Son execute or effect their plans and purposes for the created universe, for mankind in general, and for the church especially. The Eternal Spirit of God was present and active at the creation of the world. The Holy Spirit is present and active with all mankind, restraining them from unbridled evil and convicting them of sin, of the necessity of repentance toward God and of righteousness. Again, the Holy Spirit is present and active with the church worldwide, preserving it from ultimate harm and ensuring that the purposes of God and of his Son are fulfilled in and through the church. Similarly, the Holy Spirit is present and actively involved with every child of God, calling them to faith in Christ, regenerating, sanctifying, guiding and instructing them from the Word of God, and sealing them unto God until the day of final redemption. The Holy Spirit is not a power, force or influence emanating from God. Rather, the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. He is equal in power, glory and eternity with the Father and with the Son. Concerning his mode of subsistence and operation, the Holy Spirit is understood to be subordinate to the Father and the Son. *This applies only to his offices or operations, however, and does not affect his complete equality with the Father and with the Son as a divine Person.*

### **Summary of the Holy Spirit's Work**

- a) The work of the Holy Spirit includes his operations in *common grace*; i.e., grace that is common to all mankind. For example, the Spirit of God works among all mankind convicting them of their sin and convincing them of their need of redemption.
- b) The work of the Holy Spirit includes *effectual calling*: i.e., he convinces men and women of their sin and need of redemption, he draws them irresistibly to Christ, and he grants them the gifts of repentance and faith. This results in their conversion. The gift of effectual calling is granted only to the elect.
- c) The work of the Holy Spirit includes *regeneration* or the new birth. The Holy Spirit regenerates everyone whom he turns to Christ in repentance and faith: i.e., he creates within them a new heart and a new spirit. This new heart thirsts after righteousness, the knowledge of God and his ways, and holiness of life.
- d) The work of the Holy Spirit includes *sealing* each believer unto the day of final redemption: i.e., the indwelling Holy Spirit is the deposit—or the solemn pledge, assurance or guarantee—of more to follow. The Spirit's indwelling presence proves that a person belongs to Christ, and that this person's final salvation is absolutely assured.
- e) The work of the Holy Spirit includes identifying each believer as an *adopted* child of God and therefore an heir of God and of the Father's household. The presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit, which is manifested outwardly in the believer's conduct by ever-increasing holiness of life, is the proof that this person has been born again of God's Holy Spirit. He is, therefore, a child of God and greatly beloved of the Father and the Son. It is for redeemed men, women and children such as these that the Lord Jesus has gone to prepare a place in heaven.
- f) The work of the Holy Spirit includes nurturing the new life through the ongoing and lifelong process of *sanctification*: i.e., the Spirit of God applies the truths of God's Word to the hearts and minds of each believer. The Spirit shows him or her from God's Word what the Lord requires. In this way, the Holy Spirit creates within the believer faith in the word and promises of God, and obedience to the will of God. Again, working through God's Word, the Spirit of God guides each believer into holiness of life or conduct.
- g) The work of the Holy Spirit includes granting to each believer the necessary spiritual and

moral *strength* or *ability* to overcome the dominant principle and power of sin. The Spirit of God enables the believer to resist temptation and the evil one himself, and to live a life that is pleasing to God. Such a life is continually being renewed after the image of its Creator, in holiness, righteousness, and the knowledge of God's will and God's ways.

- h) The work of the Holy Spirit includes *guiding* each believer into all the truth of God's Word and making known God's express purposes for that believer's life. Thus, in obedience to the will and purposes of God, each believer learns to yield himself or herself—in body and soul—wholly to the one who redeemed him or her. And the Lord called and redeemed each of his people to fulfil a specific purpose in the mind and will of God.
- i) The work of the Holy Spirit includes granting to each child of God the ability and the determination to *persevere* in the faith and in holiness of life. The Spirit of God enables the believer to do so regardless of the difficulties, opposition or hindrances that are set before him, and regardless too of the dangers of living for Christ in a potentially or actually hostile environment. In the face of greatest opposition, the Holy Spirit endues and empowers the believer with a spirit of courage, fortitude, boldness and resolve to stand for Christ and to make Christ known in the preaching of the Gospel. Once more, the faithful believer does this regardless of the cost.

The foregoing is only a brief outline of the work of the Holy Spirit. Not all aspects of the Holy Spirit's work have been listed above.

We will now consider the work of the Holy Spirit in more detail. Firstly, we will look at the work of the Holy Spirit in common grace; then, secondly, we will consider the Holy Spirit's work in efficacious or saving grace.

## **Common Grace**

### ***(Grace that is Common to All Mankind)***

The work of the Holy Spirit is not confined to the children of God. The Spirit of God works among all mankind restraining them from uncontrolled evil and convicting them of sin, righteousness and judgment. Since this aspect of the Holy Spirit's work applies to all mankind indiscriminately, it is sometimes known as the 'common operations' of the Holy Spirit or *common grace*.

## **Common Operations of the Holy Spirit**

The presence or absence of the Holy Spirit in the world makes all the difference between order and chaos, moral restraint and moral permissiveness. To the general influence of the Holy Spirit operating in common grace, we owe the following:

- All the relative dignity, decency, order, refinement, and virtue that exists, to a greater or lesser degree, among men.
- The general fear of God, and the religious feelings which prevails among men, and which results in their endeavouring to give some attention to religious rites and services, although not with an enlightened mind or a regenerated soul.
- That seeking after God, which is associated with some degree of religious inclination or experience, but which is not attended or followed by genuine conversion. The Holy Spirit brings conviction of truth to the conscience. Men and women may react or respond to a limited degree. However, they are not truly convinced and are not regenerated by the Spirit of God. It is into this category that so many 'religious' or church-going people fall. They may give a nominal assent to the truths of the Bible. They may profess to believe in God. Nevertheless, their hearts have never been renewed through repentance and saving faith in Christ. Although, outwardly, they may appear very religious, such people are still in their sins.

### **Common Grace is Not Saving Grace**

From this, it can be seen that many people who profess to belong to Christ do not necessarily know Christ savingly. This is the lesson taught by the Lord Jesus to his followers in the parable of the sower and the parable of the tares. In both parables, it is evident that false professors of faith will be intermingled with true believers within the church of God. It may be virtually impossible to distinguish between them while they remain within the pale of the visible church.

Only at the Judgment on the Last Day will all remaining false professors be exposed and separated from the true (invisible) church of God. On that day, the false professors—the ‘tares’ or the ‘weeds’—will be cast into the fire for eternal destruction.<sup>1</sup>

### **Effect of Common Grace**

Common grace or the general working of the Holy Spirit among all mankind is not the same as saving grace. We may summarise common grace as follows:

- The work of the Holy Spirit in common grace is sufficient to convince men and women of sin and of their need of redemption. (John 16:8-10; Acts 2:37)
- Common grace is sufficient to convince mankind of the truth of the Gospel, thus leaving unbelieving and unrepentant mankind without excuse. (Acts 7:51; Rom. 1:19-20)
- Common grace is sufficient to convince men and women of their duty to accept the offer of mercy, and to live in obedience to the commands of the Word of God. (Rom. 1:21; 2:15)
- Common grace is sufficient to convince men and women that their impenitence and unbelief are due to themselves; to their own evil hearts, and to make plain to them that they have voluntarily chosen the pleasures of the world in preference to the service of Christ. (Luke 14:26-27; Rom.. 2:5)

Everyone who hears the Gospel is essentially affected by the influence of common grace. Common grace, however, is not sufficient to raise the spiritually dead. It cannot change a person’s heart or produce regeneration or the new birth in that person’s life. This is the work of saving or efficacious grace, not common grace.

### **Efficacious Grace**

#### **(Saving Grace)**

When the Holy Spirit works effectually in a person’s life, convincing him of sin, righteousness and judgment, and of his need of redemption, and when he draws that person irresistibly to Christ, granting him the ability to repent and believe, this is known as efficacious or saving grace. All those who experience saving grace are led to faith in Christ. They are born again or regenerated by the Holy Spirit. God justifies them through faith, and thereafter the Holy Spirit continues to sanctify them. These alone are the children of God. These alone are the members of Christ’s body, the church. These alone are the possessors of the indwelling Holy Spirit who seals them unto God until the day of final redemption.<sup>2</sup>

### **Important Points Regarding the Work of the Holy Spirit**

Concerning the Spirit of God, the Lord Jesus said several things that we have outlined as follows:

1. The Holy Spirit is sent (or proceeds) from the Father and the Son.

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<sup>1</sup> See further on *Bible Truths Explained: Faith*, under *The Parable of the Sower*, by Gordon Lyons.

<sup>2</sup> For further information on the differences between the work of the Holy Spirit in common grace and the work of the Holy Spirit in efficacious or saving grace, see on *Bible Truths Explained: Repentance* under these sub-headings.

John 15:26

<sup>(26)</sup> But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, *even* the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:

2. The Spirit of God brings to the believer's remembrance everything that Christ has said.

John 14:26

<sup>(26)</sup> But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

3. He testifies about Christ; and, by that same Holy Spirit, the believer also must testify about Christ.

John 15:26-27

<sup>(26)</sup> But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, *even* the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: <sup>(27)</sup> And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

4. The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment.

John 16:8-11

<sup>(8)</sup> And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: <sup>(9)</sup> Of sin, because they believe not on me; <sup>(10)</sup> Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; <sup>(11)</sup> Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

5. He guides the apostles, and believers more generally, into all truth.

John 16:13a

<sup>(13a)</sup> Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth...

6. He teaches only those truths that are contained in the Word of God; i.e., he does not add any supposed 'new revelations' to that Word, nor does he subtract any teaching from that Word.

John 16:13b

<sup>(13b)</sup> ...for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will show you things to come.

7. In his teaching ministry, the Holy Spirit does not draw attention to himself, nor does he seek to glorify either himself or the gifts that he imparts. Rather, the Holy Spirit takes of the things pertaining to the Son of God and teaches them in such a way as brings glory to the name of Christ. In this way, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are honoured and glorified.

John 16:14-15

<sup>(14)</sup> He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show *it* unto you. <sup>(15)</sup> All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show *it* unto you.

## Part 2

### ***The Holy Spirit's Activities (1)***

#### **The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Physical Realm**

##### ***The Holy Spirit Active in Creation***

The Holy Spirit is mentioned at the very beginning of the Bible. He was active in the creation of the universe and of everything that it contains. The Spirit of God is sent forth to bring creation into being in all its manifold complexity and grandeur. As he through whom God executes his commands, the Holy Spirit is the one who imparts life to every living creature. This, of course, does not set aside any of the established laws of nature. It merely asserts that the laws of nature depend on the Spirit of their Creator for their origin and for their continuing operations.

Concerning the activity of the Holy Spirit in creation, God's Word says:

Genesis 1:1-2

<sup>(1)</sup> In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. <sup>(2)</sup> And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

Psalms 104:30

<sup>(30)</sup> Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.

#### **The Holy Spirit Active in Conception and Birth**

Again, in reference to God the Holy Spirit, the psalmist says:

Psalms 139:13-16

<sup>(13)</sup> For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.

<sup>(14)</sup> I will praise thee; for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made: marvellous *are* thy works; and *that* my soul knoweth right well.

<sup>(15)</sup> My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, *and* curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

<sup>(16)</sup> Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all *my members* were written, *which* in continuance were fashioned, when as *yet there* was none of them.

Or, as the NIV renders the above passage:

Psalm 139:13-16

<sup>(13)</sup> For you created my inmost being;  
you knit me together in my mother's womb.

<sup>(14)</sup> I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;  
your works are wonderful,  
I know that full well.

<sup>(15)</sup> My frame was not hidden from you  
when I was made in the secret place.  
When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,

<sup>(16)</sup> your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

(Cf. v.13 with Isa. 44:2,24; 49:5)

Again, in reminding his people that—from conception to old age—the LORD watches over his people, God says through his prophet Isaiah:

Isaiah 46:3-4

<sup>(3)</sup> Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne *by me* from the belly, which are carried from the womb:

<sup>(4)</sup> And *even to your* old age I *am* he; and *even to hoar* hairs will I carry *you*: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver *you*.

## **Human Life is both Physical and Spiritual**

### ***(Body and Soul)***

Life, in all its forms, is the creation of God. In heaven, the highest form of life is God himself (uncreated life). Beneath God in glory, dignity, power and honour are the several classes of holy angels (higher created intelligences). On earth, the highest form of intelligent life is human life.

Concerning human life, life must be considered to begin at the point of fertilisation (day one of conception). From this point on, the fertilised living cell begins to sub-divide. Approximately seven days later—assuming successful implantation in the womb—this developing life gradually begins to assume the form of a recognisable human being. This, however, indicates the early development of life only in respect of its physical or biological and psychological components.

### ***The Soul is Essential to Human Life***

In biological terms, life is the product of natural reproductive processes. However, physical life by no means constitutes the sum total of human life. Human life consists of body and soul. The body is physical, mortal and visible. The soul, however, is spiritual (or spirit), immortal and invisible.

In Biblical terms, the body is not the result of natural processes alone. It is the creation of God's Holy Spirit, acting through these natural processes. The immortal soul, however, is imparted by God's Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God does this—not by natural processes—but by a direct creative act. This act is considered to take place at conception (Isa. 46:3). Without the imparting of an immortal soul, human life would be incomplete and on a par with the higher forms of animal life. A human being, however, is not merely a higher form of animal life. Mankind is a distinct creation. Men and women were created in the *spiritual and moral image and likeness of God*. No animal has ever been so created. Only through sin did mankind fall from this exalted position—where he ruled over the animal kingdom—to his present position.

A characteristic mark of all human life is that all people throughout the world seek to worship and to offer sacrifices to various gods. However, no animal ever seeks to worship, for no animal has been created in the image and likeness of God (morally and spiritually), and no animal possesses a spiritual nature or an immortal soul. Fallen mankind may seek to worship all kinds of false gods and idols. Nevertheless, the fact that they seek to worship at all is evidence that they possess a God-given spiritual soul and nature, unlike any member of the animal creation. Unregenerate mankind worship false gods and idols only because of their fallen sinful natures, and of their consequent spiritual death and

alienation from the true and living God.

***Life without the Soul is Not Truly Human***

God—not man—is the Creator of each new life. God will continue to be the Creator of human life *until the day that man can create an immortal soul* within a developing human cell. Clearly, this day will never arrive.

Even if, one day, it were to prove possible for man to produce a form of human life by artificial means (i.e., under laboratory conditions), that 'life' would be physical life alone. Unless it has been derived from naturally produced human cells, and unless the Spirit of God imparted an immortal soul to it during its creation, such life would be very similar to animal life alone. It would be destitute of a soul and destitute of all hope for a future in the presence of God. Such life would be life without a soul, for no human being can create or replicate an immortal soul. And life without an immortal soul is not truly human. In all outward respects, it may appear human. But human it could never become.

Such a thought does not bear serious contemplation. What kind of beings might mankind then produce, if they did not possess a soul and thus were utterly destitute of spiritual truths and of all knowledge of, and desire for, the things of God?

**The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Moral and Spiritual Realm**

***The Holy Spirit Interprets the Bible***

In matters pertaining to salvation and eternal life, God's Word, the Bible, cannot rightly be understood without the assistance of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the enlightener and interpreter of all spiritual truths contained in the Bible. All attempts to understand spiritual truths apart from the Holy Spirit's guidance and illumination are doomed to failure, or at least to gross misunderstanding and grave error.

Without the Holy Spirit's power, the Bible remains a closed book to the minds of unbelievers. This is not to say that they cannot understand many of the moral truths or historical details in God's Word, for they certainly can. Nevertheless, they remain blind to the spiritual and eternal truths of God's Word until the Spirit of Truth removes the veil that covers their minds. Only then, can they see the beauties of God's Truth. Only then, can they comprehend the wonders of God's living, abiding and eternal Word.

To this end, God's Word says:

1 Corinthians 2:14

<sup>(14)</sup> But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.

Generally, the Holy Spirit works in conjunction with the Word of God to impress the truth upon the minds of unbelievers; and, in a very special way, upon the minds of believers. However, the Holy Spirit is sovereign and free to work apart from God's Word. Even so, he never works contrary to anything taught in God's Word. For example, the Spirit generally brings people to repentance and faith in Christ by revealing the truths of the Gospel to them, enabling them to understand and believe these truths with their minds and in their hearts. The truths of the Gospel, of course, form an essential part of the Word of God. As a rule, faith comes by hearing that Word preached, or by reading the Word.

Sometimes, however, a person may not be in a position to hear, read or receive the Word of God. Or he may be incapable of understanding that Word. In such cases, the Holy Spirit can work directly in that person's life, regenerating their soul and bringing him or her into the kingdom of God.

Such people may be those, who—because of some medical condition—cannot understand the Word of God. They are incapable, therefore, of responding to the external call of the Gospel. Alternatively, they may be children who die in infancy, or before birth, and who therefore do not live long enough to

understand the Gospel and to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Notwithstanding the inability in either case, the Holy Spirit will regenerate every one of God's children—of whatever age. Without reservation, every one will be accepted into the kingdom of God. This applies whether or not these people have been baptised or received formally into the church.

It must be remembered that, in and of itself, baptism does not save a person. It neither regenerates nor justifies a person. The ordinance of baptism is purely typical and symbolical. Even although a person has been baptised, that person will not inherit the kingdom of heaven unless the Holy Spirit has regenerated his mind and soul. All whom God effectually calls, however, certainly will be regenerated by his Holy Spirit. For effectual calling always results in regeneration.

### ***The Holy Spirit Active in Effectual Calling***

Without the work of the Holy Spirit in effectual calling, repentance and faith would be impossible. For a person to be brought to repentance and faith, the Holy Spirit must add his testimony to the testimony of the Bible. The Holy Spirit is the one who gives life to the Word. The Holy Spirit is the one who brings conviction of sin. The Holy Spirit is the one who brings a convicted sinner to Christ. The Holy Spirit is the one who grants the ability to that sinner to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Where, therefore, the Holy Spirit is absent, repentance and faith is impossible. This is why it is essential that we do not depend on ourselves, or on human wisdom, knowledge or eloquence, to explain the Scriptures; or on the Word of God by itself, but on the Word and the Spirit acting together. Thus, the apostle Paul declares:

1 Corinthians 2:4-5

<sup>(4)</sup> And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: <sup>(5)</sup> That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. (See also vv.1-3)

To the believers in Thessalonica, Paul says:

1 Thessalonians 1:4-5

<sup>(4)</sup> Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. <sup>(5)</sup> For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

Without the active presence of the Holy Spirit, the Bible remains a closed book to the unbeliever. However, when the Spirit acts, the Word of God becomes clearly understood.

Clearly, then, the people of God must never endeavour to minister without praying for the Spirit of God to attend their ministry. For, no matter how carefully prepared, and no matter how clearly presented, a ministry without the Spirit is like a body without life.

### ***The Holy Spirit Active in Regeneration***

#### **The Spirit Imparts Life to the Dead**

As we have said, sinners are brought to repentance and faith through the work of the Holy Spirit in effectual calling. This is done by the Holy Spirit adding his testimony to the testimony of the Bible, or to the preaching or reading of God's Word. The Spirit is the breath of God that brings the Word of God to life, and that imparts life to those who are spiritually dead.

As in Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones, it was the Spirit of God who brought these lifeless bones together, and it was the Spirit of God who breathed life and vitality into them. (Ezek. 37:1-14)

The LORD had said to Ezekiel, '*Can these bones live?*' We may say, 'Can a spiritually dead sinner live?' The answer in both cases is the same: Salvation blessings are bestowed upon the lost and spiri-

tually dead only by the work of the Holy Spirit of God.

### ***Water and The Spirit***

In both the Old and New Testaments, the blessings of the Holy Spirit are sometimes depicted as an outpouring of water. Concerning the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in blessing, the Scripture says:

Isaiah 44:3

<sup>(3)</sup> For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring:

Compare also the following passage from the prophet Ezekiel:

Ezekiel 36:25-27

<sup>(25)</sup> Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. <sup>(26)</sup> A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. <sup>(27)</sup> And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do *them*.

The Holy Spirit is envisaged as the one who, by his gracious effects, resembles the waters of a cool refreshing, sustaining and renewing stream in the desert. The Spirit is like an endless stream, or an everlasting spring that provides life to the lifeless, dry and thirsty land. Jesus used this analogy of water and the Spirit to illustrate the life-giving and soul-refreshing power of the Holy Spirit to all those who thirst after God. Thus, concerning Nicodemus, the Scripture says:

John 3:5-8

<sup>(5)</sup> Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. <sup>(6)</sup> That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>(7)</sup> Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. <sup>(8)</sup> The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

This passage illustrates man's total inability to enter God's kingdom—i.e., to repent and believe—apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. For it is only by the active work and effectual calling of the Holy Spirit within a person that this person is drawn irresistibly to Christ.

The above passage also illustrates that only the Spirit of God can impart the new birth (regeneration). Regeneration or the new birth is the culminating act of effectual calling, and these acts of the Holy Spirit are essential to salvation. Furthermore, the above passage illustrates that, by his Holy Spirit, God gives this new birth to whomever he chooses to give it. In other words, the working of the Holy Spirit in effectual calling and regeneration is according to God's sovereign purposes in election.

### ***Living Water Is Eternal Life***

We have seen that—in order to enter God's kingdom—a person must be born of water and the Spirit. What, though, did Jesus mean when he said a person must be born of water and the Spirit? In talking to the woman of Samaria, the Lord himself provides the answer:

John 4:10,13-14

<sup>(10)</sup> Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of

him, and he would have given thee living water...

<sup>(13)</sup> Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: <sup>(14)</sup> But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

In the Bible, water is symbolic of renewal and cleansing or purification. This cleansing is effected—not by natural water, which cannot cleanse the soul—but by 'living water': that is, the renewing, cleansing and purifying effects of the Holy Spirit in regeneration and sanctification. This alone can effect cleansing of the soul—the whole inward being.

### ***The Holy Spirit Is the Living Water***

That the Holy Spirit is the one who brings a person into the experience of salvation and eternal life, is shown from the following Scriptures where the Lord Jesus cried out to be people:

John 7:37b-39

<sup>(37b)</sup> ...If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. <sup>(38)</sup> He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. <sup>(39)</sup> (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet *given*; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

### ***The Spirit and the Word Give Eternal Life***

And again, concerning the necessity for the Holy Spirit to make effective the testimony of God's Word, Jesus said to his disciples:

John 6:63

<sup>(63)</sup> It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life.

The Bible is the living Word of God—just as the words Jesus uttered were the living words of God's Son. However, the Holy Spirit must add his testimony to God's Word in order to make it effective. The Holy Spirit does this by bringing the hearer or reader under conviction; then by convincing him of sin, righteousness, and judgment; then by converting him to Christ by graciously bestowing upon him the gifts of repentance and faith (conversion=repentance+faith).

All this, however, is the work of God's Holy Spirit. Thus, from beginning to end, salvation is all God's unmerited love, grace and mercy, and none of man's desire, effort or deserving. (Rom. 9: 14-18)

### ***Washing of Rebirth by the Holy Spirit***

#### **(Baptised By the Spirit into the Body of Christ)**

Everyone who repents and believes on Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord is regenerated and baptised by the Holy Spirit into the one body of Christ, which is his church. Sometimes, this is referred to as the 'baptism of the Spirit'. The baptism of the Spirit, however, should not be confused either with water baptism (symbolising spiritual cleansing and also death, burial, and resurrection with Christ), or with the bestowal of individual gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Concerning entry into God's kingdom (constituted on earth by the true members of the worldwide church), the Lord Jesus says:

John 3:5

<sup>(5)</sup> Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

And, to the same purpose, the apostle Paul says:

1 Corinthians 12:13

<sup>(13)</sup> For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

Again, the apostle Paul writes to Titus:

Titus 3:4-7

<sup>(4)</sup> But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, <sup>(5)</sup> Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; <sup>(6)</sup> Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; <sup>(7)</sup> That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

The baptism of the Spirit occurs at regeneration. When a person is born again, he is baptised (spiritually) into the church and he receives the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Without the indwelling Holy Spirit, a person does not belong to Christ and cannot therefore participate in any of the benefits of redemption.

### ***Washing with Water through the Word***

In speaking about the purity of the church, the apostle Paul said:

Ephesians 5:25-27

<sup>(25)</sup> Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; <sup>(26)</sup> That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, <sup>(27)</sup> That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Clearly, then, when speaking of regeneration, the term 'water' is being used metaphorically.

Regeneration or the new birth is effected when—by the Holy Spirit—a sinner is effectually called to repentance and faith in the Son of God. This is the Biblical teaching. This teaching is contrary to the opinion that the Holy Spirit effects regeneration through, or during, water baptism—as is supposed by those who practise 'baptismal regeneration'<sup>3</sup>

### ***The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Lives of Believers***

Immediately following regeneration and spiritual baptism, the Holy Spirit then permanently indwells each individual child of God, in order to carry out his work of sanctification in that person's life, and also to identify and seal the believer as belonging to God. We will now consider the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit as it relates to the lives of each individual child of God.

### ***The Holy Spirit is the Seal of Adoption***

Those who have been born of the Spirit of God, and who are being led by God's Spirit, are the children of God. None others can claim the rights and privileges of God's children; for those rights and privileges belong only to those whom God has redeemed and adopted—those in whom God has placed his Holy Spirit as a seal of ownership and as a deposit guaranteeing their final redemption.

Concerning the fact that the children of God must walk by the Spirit, the Scripture says:

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<sup>3</sup> See further on *Bible Truths Explained: Regeneration*, by Gordon Lyons.

Romans 8:9,13-14

<sup>(9)</sup> But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his...

<sup>(13)</sup> For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. <sup>(14)</sup> For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

And, concerning their adoption as true children of God, the Scripture says:

Romans 8:15-17

<sup>(15)</sup> For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. <sup>(16)</sup> The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: <sup>(17)</sup> And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together.

And, in the Galatians, the apostle Paul says:

Galatians 4:6-7

<sup>(6)</sup> And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. <sup>(7)</sup> Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

And, in Ephesians, Paul says:

Ephesians 1:5,13-14

<sup>(5)</sup> Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will...

<sup>(13)</sup> In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, <sup>(14)</sup> Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

In the civil realm, a certificate of adoption is the written legal documentary evidence that a person has been adopted into a particular family as a child and heir. Similarly, in the spiritual realm, the Holy Spirit is the seal or evidence documenting our adoption by the Father. The Spirit's indwelling presence certifies that we are the true children of God, and heirs—together with Christ—of our Father's house.

There is an important distinction between the sonship of believers and the sonship of Christ: Believers are God's sons or daughters *by grace*, whereas the Lord Jesus Christ is God's Son *by nature*.<sup>4</sup>

### ***The Holy Spirit Guides into All Truth***

To his disciples, the Lord Jesus said:

John 16:12-15

<sup>(12)</sup> I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

<sup>(13)</sup> Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. <sup>(14)</sup> He shall glorify me:

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<sup>4</sup> See further on *Bible Truths Explained: Adoption*, by Gordon Lyons.

for he shall receive of mine, and shall show *it* unto you. <sup>(15)</sup> All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show *it* unto you.

The Lord Jesus promised his disciples that, after he departed, he would send them another Counsellor—the Holy Spirit. In his capacity as Counsellor or Comforter, the Holy Spirit would remain with God's redeemed people forever. He would guide the people of God into all truth; that is, into a knowledge and understanding of all the truths of God's Word, the Bible. Without the presence of the Spirit of God, the Bible cannot rightly be interpreted or understood.

It is because of this, that so many people misunderstand and misapply the teaching of God's inerrant Word. The Spirit of God is the key to understanding the Bible. Human wisdom, understanding or learning is wholly inadequate to reveal the truths of God's Word properly, if that wisdom, understanding or learning is not under the direct control of the Holy Spirit of God.

However, the people of God need never fear misunderstanding the Word of God. For to them is the promise given that the Spirit will guide them into all truth, and make known to them all that the Bible teaches and reveals—not in and by human wisdom, but in and by the wisdom of God—in words taught by the Spirit of God.

The full significance of these truths are revealed to the believer gradually, as he becomes better acquainted with God's Word. The believer's understanding of God's Word therefore increases gradually. This increase in understanding may be slow or rapid depending on the believer's knowledge of the Bible, and his capacity to assimilate and retain that knowledge. Also, and more importantly, it depends on his degree of commitment to the Lord, and of his willingness to submit to the teaching of God's Holy Spirit as revealed in the Bible.

Again, the believer need not fear misunderstanding God's Word because he has not been formally instructed in the principles of Bible doctrine, or because he has not been gifted with academic qualities that enable him to study these doctrines in detail. The Spirit of God reveals the truths of God to the most unlearned believer, as well as to the most learned. It requires only that the believer approach God's Word prayerfully, and with a humble, receptive and responsive heart, depending on the Holy Spirit to help him interpret God's Word correctly, as he makes use of his God-given faculties.

But what truths does the Spirit of God reveal? He reveals everything that is contained in the Word of God in such a manner that it is understood, believed, and acted upon by the child of God. The believer is required to read the Word of God—thoughtfully and prayerfully. The Holy Spirit then takes that Word, and applies it in power. Thus, the believer is fed and nourished on the Word of God, and thus he is enabled to learn that Word more fully, to progress in sanctification, and to grow in holiness of life.

### ***The Holy Spirit as Comforter or Counsellor***

#### **(The Paraclete)**

While still with his disciples, Jesus told them that he would not leave them desolate, but would send another Comforter or Counsellor (Gk. Parakletos) who would be in them and would remain with them forever. The Comforter of whom he spoke was the Holy Spirit. Thus, Jesus said:

John 14:15-18

<sup>(15)</sup> If ye love me, keep my commandments. <sup>(16)</sup> And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; <sup>(17)</sup> *Even* the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. <sup>(18)</sup> I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

Again, the Lord Jesus said:

John 16:6-7

<sup>(6)</sup> But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. <sup>(7)</sup> Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

The indwelling Holy Spirit is the one whom the Lord Jesus promised to send in his place. The Spirit of God indwells each believer, sealing them to God as his own children by adoption. The Holy Spirit can never be withdrawn; the Lord promised that he would remain with his own people forever. In addition, the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable.

As a disciplinary measure, the *gifts* of the Spirit may be suspended or withdrawn, and the sense of God's immediate presence with the believer may be forfeited temporarily (see further below). But neither the gift of salvation, nor the Holy Spirit's actual indwelling presence, is ever withdrawn from a truly regenerated child of God.

### ***The Holy Spirit as Intercessor***

The Holy Spirit is the one who communicates our prayers to our Father in heaven. Often, the people of God do not know how to pray as they ought, or how adequately to express the thoughts of their hearts and minds. But the Spirit who searches heart and mind knows our innermost thoughts. He is able to take these thoughts, sanctify them, and more than adequately express them to God in heaven. Thus, the Holy Spirit intercedes for the saints, according to the will of God.

This intercessory work of the Spirit should not be thought of as detached from the mediating and intercessory work of the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus intercedes and mediates with the Father on our behalf, pleading the merits of his blood and of his finished work as the grounds of our eternal salvation. The benefits of this salvation are applied to each believer through the work of the Holy Spirit in that person's life.

Again—through the Holy Spirit—the believer's prayers, petitions, praises and thanksgiving are presented to the Son and to the Father as an acceptable spiritual offering. Similarly, it is through the personal agency of the Holy Spirit that God communicates his will to us. God's will for his people is revealed in the Bible. However, this will is effected or implemented in the lives of his people both internally (through the Holy Spirit's work of sanctification), and externally (through God's works of providence).

The Holy Spirit, therefore, is the *executive by which* God's works are effected, and by which the Father and the Son apply or implement the finished work of redemption in each believer's life. Again, the Holy Spirit is the one by whom the believer is being progressively sanctified. <sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See further on G. Smeaton, *Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, p.4

## Part 3

### ***The Holy Spirit's Activities (2)***

#### **The Holy Spirit Active in Sanctification**

The doctrine of sanctification has been dealt with elsewhere in this series of studies, so only a brief summary will be provided here.

Concerning the elect, the work of the Holy Spirit may be said to begin from the point of an elect person's conception and birth (although, of course, God has already chosen that person from before the creation of the world). From conception, however, the Spirit of God keeps vigil over that life until that person has been effectually called to Christ and regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

Following regeneration or the new birth, the Holy Spirit then begins the lifelong work of sanctification. This is done through the cleansing and purifying effect of the Word of God—as applied by the Spirit of holiness to the believer's life. In this way, the Holy Spirit brings the moral and spiritual truths of God's Word to bear upon the individual believer's life; thereby fashioning that person's life and conduct more and more after the image of Christ. To this end, the apostle Paul reminds the people of God:

Romans 8:12-14

<sup>(12)</sup> Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. <sup>(13)</sup> For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. <sup>(14)</sup> For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. (See vv. 1-11)

In regeneration or the new birth, the believer cannot co-operate in any way. Regeneration is exclusively God's work. It is a work of God's sovereign grace, and it is effected by the Holy Spirit in the lives of everyone whom—from eternity—God has predestined to salvation.

In sanctification, however, the believer actively co-operates with the Holy Spirit. As the Spirit reveals to him the truths of God's Word, the believer must put off—willingly and actively—everything that belongs to the old sinful nature (the 'flesh'). In its place, he must put on everything that belongs to the new spiritual nature: that holy nature that comes to him from the Spirit of God and that is being fed and nourished constantly by the Word of God. Active trust and wholehearted obedience are the necessary elements of a life that is being sanctified by the indwelling presence of God's Holy Spirit. Thus, the Scripture says:

Galatians 5:16-18

<sup>(16)</sup> *This* I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. <sup>(17)</sup> For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. <sup>(18)</sup> But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

The work of sanctification can be hindered by sins such as unbelief or disobedience.

Again, another element of sanctification is discipline. Discipline includes training and chastisement. Training is a non-punitive form of discipline, whereas chastisement is a punitive form. Whichever form is applied, the designed outcome is instruction in righteousness, or correction—resulting in holiness of life.

The lifelong work of sanctification is brought to completion in glorification. When the believer is taken into the presence of the Lord, he is then presented before God faultless and blameless, and with great rejoicing.<sup>6</sup>

## Evidences of Sanctification

### *The Fruit of the Spirit*

God's Word says:

Galatians 5:22-23

<sup>(22)</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, <sup>(23)</sup> Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

The Holy Spirit, acting through the Word of God, sanctifies every believer. The effect of sanctification is seen in the fruit it produces in the believer's life. This fruit—or these characteristics—are known as *the fruit of the Spirit*; and the fruit of the Spirit must manifest itself in the lives of every true child of God. Not every believer will manifest the same amount of fruit—for not every child of God has reached the same level of spiritual maturity. But there should be a continual growth in grace and in holiness of life.

The more a believer manifests the fruit of the Spirit, the less place there will be in his life for the deeds of the old sinful nature. For, although the old nature coexists with the new, the new must predominate and the old must be mortified or put to death. This, however, can be achieved only by walking (or living) in the power of the Spirit.

If, however, a believer consistently fails to produce the fruit of the Spirit, then something is very far wrong with that believer's spiritual life. For a good tree must produce good fruit. Contrariwise, a barren tree is worthless; and a tree that fails to produce fruit in its season is ultimately cut down and cast into the fire.

Thus, a person may claim to believe in Christ, but the truth of his claim will be revealed by his subsequent manner of life or conduct. For there can be no regeneration and justification without corresponding sanctification and holiness of life. Those, however, who are not being sanctified, have never been regenerated and justified. According to the Word of God, they are still in their sins. (Rom. 8: 5-9; Gal. 5: 19-21)

## Gifts of God's Grace

The greatest of all God's gift is the gift of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, whom God sent forth as a propitiation or sacrifice of atonement for the sins of his people. The Lord Jesus has secured for us an eternal redemption, or an eternal salvation. He graciously bestows this priceless gift of salvation upon all his elect people.

The word 'salvation' is a comprehensive term, including within its scope the gifts of effectual calling and regeneration, repentance, justification, adoption, sanctification and glorification. It also includes many other salvation blessings, such as assurance, perseverance and good works. Salvation is the gift of God, and it is a gift that is common to all believers.

There are, however, a number of other spiritual gifts, which are not necessarily common to all believers. We shall be considering some of these below. Before we do so, however, we will note the cessation of certain spiritual gifts and offices. Having observed this point, we will then consider the significance of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles at Pentecost, and the particular gifts that God's Spirit bestowed upon them at that time.

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<sup>6</sup> See further on *Bible Truths Explained: Adoption; Sanctification*, by Gordon Lyons.

## **Cessation of Certain Gifts and Offices**

### ***Cessation of Gift of Inspiration and the Prophetic and Apostolic Offices***

The offices of prophet and of apostle (together with the special gifts associated with these two offices) ceased with the closure of the canon of Scripture. Both of these offices required the gift of plenary inspiration.

It was essential that the Holy Spirit inspired the prophets and apostles, in order to preserve them from any possibility of error in teaching. The gift of inspiration was given to God's prophets under the Old Testament arrangement. It was given also to the apostles of the Lord Jesus during the period of the early (apostolic) church.

Regarding the fact that God's servant—both prophets and apostles—spoke and wrote by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the apostle Paul says:

2 Timothy 3:16-17

<sup>(16)</sup> All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: <sup>(17)</sup> That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. (See vv. 14-15)

Similarly, the apostle Peter says:

2 Peter 1:20-21

<sup>(20)</sup> Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. <sup>(21)</sup> For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost. (See vv. 16-19)

The inspired and sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were compiled gradually over a period of about 1,600 years. Before the completion and closure of the canon of Scripture, inspiration had extended not only to God's written word but also to God's verbal word. The verbal word was proclaimed faithfully at different times by God's officially appointed and inspired servants—the prophets and apostles. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, much of God's verbal word was subsequently incorporated into the canon of Holy Scripture during the period of its compilation. Since the completion and closure of the canon, however, inspiration extends to God's *written* word—the Bible—alone.

The gift of inspiration—which invariably was accompanied and authenticated by signs and wonders—continued only until the teachings of the Lord Jesus and his apostles had been committed to writing. After the New Testament had been completed, the gift of inspiration ceased. This gift was no longer necessary, since God's people were now in possession of his fully inspired, authoritative and complete written Word—the Bible. For this reason, there is no modern equivalent of the inspired prophet or apostles. In addition, since God has revealed his will and ways to everyone in the Bible, he no longer speaks to people through plenary inspired prophets or apostles.

The gift of inspiration has ceased—together with the offices of prophets and apostles and the accompanying signs and wonders. However, the Holy Spirit may still impart other gifts or offices (offices not requiring the conjoined gift of plenary inspiration) to individual believers, as he wills.

## **The Outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost**

The Holy Spirit had been present with the apostles before Pentecost; for, without him, the disciples could not have been regenerated. Nor could they have performed miraculous signs in the name of the Lord Jesus. But this they clearly did when Jesus was present on earth and when he sent them forth to preach the Gospel, and to cast out evil spirits in his name.

However, in a sense, the apostles' experience of the working and power of the Holy Spirit was limited.

While he remained present with them, the Lord Jesus was their immediate Teacher or Instructor. But, after the Lord's departure, this office was to be filled by the immediate and indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. In this capacity, the Holy Spirit would guide the Lord's disciples into all truth, and bring to their remembrance all that the Lord Jesus had taught them.

Again, although the apostles had previously ministered in the Lord's name, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, they had not yet been formally endued from on high with the Spirit's power. However, this power was necessary to establish formally the (NT) Church, and to confirm the apostles publicly in their office as the appointed servants of the Lord Jesus. Again, the gifts associated with their apostolic office would be essential for the fulfilment of the commission to preach the Gospel to all nations, and for teaching the infant church in all the ways of the Lord. These gifts included the gift of inspiration and the gift of tongues.

It was for reasons such as these that—following the Lord Jesus' resurrection, and just before his ascension—the apostles were told to wait for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Only then, would they be empowered and equipped fully for the great task that now lay before them and to which they had been chosen, called and appointed by the Lord Jesus himself.

When the day of Pentecost came, the Holy Spirit descended upon the Lord's followers in mighty power, appearing like tongues of fire on each of them and filling them with power from God. Thus, the apostles were enabled by the power of God to speak boldly in the name of the risen and glorified Lord Jesus, and to declare to the world the message of eternal salvation through faith in his name.

At this time, many Jewish people and other worshippers of God from various foreign countries had come to Jerusalem in order to celebrate the feast of Pentecost. When the Holy Spirit had descended upon the apostles, these people had heard the message of the Gospel being proclaimed to them in their own native tongues or languages. Thus had begun the diffusion of the Gospel to all nations; for this message of eternal life would be taken back to the various countries represented by the influx of visitors to Jerusalem.

The outpouring of the Spirit in this manner was not confined to the twelve apostles alone. Many other followers of the Lord also received individual gifts of the Holy Spirit to equip them for the particular service to which the Lord had called them. These gifts were many and varied. But they were given for the common good of the entire church.

## **The Gift of Tongues**

The gift of tongues is the gift of being able to speak in a recognisable and identifiable foreign language—a language that the speaker has not learned previously. This, clearly, is the teaching of the Word of God in Acts chapter 2, where the Spirit enabled the apostles to speak to the many foreign visitors to Jerusalem in their respective native tongues or languages.

In fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel, who predicted the diffusion or outpouring of the Spirit in the latter days, and of the Lord Jesus' promise to send the Holy Spirit in power upon his followers, the Scripture says:

Acts 2:1-4

<sup>(1)</sup> And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. <sup>(2)</sup> And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. <sup>(3)</sup> And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. <sup>(4)</sup> And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

On hearing the Lord's disciples speaking in tongues, many foreign visitors to Jerusalem asked in amazement:

Acts 2:7b-8

<sup>(7b)</sup> ...Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? <sup>(8)</sup> And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?

With the bestowal of the gift of tongues, the apostles were enabled to proclaim the message of eternal salvation through repentance and faith in the Son of God. This message was clearly understood by the many foreign worshippers present in Jerusalem, because the Gospel was being proclaimed to the various ethnic groups represented—each in his own native language.

## **Ecstatic Utterance**

When God bestowed a gift of the Spirit—such as the gift of prophecy, or the gift of tongues—the bestowal of the gift was sometimes accompanied temporarily by the phenomenon known commonly as ‘ecstatic utterance’.

### ***Ecstatic Utterance amongst the Lord’s Servants***

Concerning the 70 elders appointed by God to assist Moses, the Scripture says:

Numbers 11:25

<sup>(25)</sup> And the LORD came down in a cloud, and spoke unto him, and took of the spirit that *was* upon him, and gave *it* unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, *that*, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease. (See also vv. 26-29)

The bestowal of the Holy Spirit’s gifts on these 70 elders resulted initially in their engaging in ecstatic prophetic utterances. But, as the Scripture says, ‘*they did not do so again*’. In this case, the ability of the elders to prophesy (temporarily) was associated with their receiving particular gifts of the Holy Spirit. These gifts were intended to qualify and equip these men for the offices of administration and justice (*they were not being called or appointed as prophets of God*). The gifts of administration and justice remained with the elders, while the effects (ecstatic prophesying) did not.

### ***Ecstatic Utterance among Prophets of Baal***

The phenomenon of ecstatic utterance was by no means confined to the Lord’s people. It was a common experience among many pagan peoples. For example, in the Old Testament, the prophets of Baal engaged in ecstatic utterances in their conflict with God’s prophet, Elijah. Thus, concerning the prophets of Baal, God’s Word says:

1 Kings 18:29

<sup>(29)</sup> And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the *time* of the offering of the *evening* sacrifice, that *there was* neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

Clearly, the prophets of Baal did not receive their ‘gift’ of ecstatic utterance from the Spirit of God. On the contrary, they had worked themselves up into an emotional frenzy in a vain attempt to evoke some response from their lifeless idols. In their case, ecstatic utterance was an indication of a false spirit—it was derived from the spirit of the evil one. As such, it had absolutely nothing in common with the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

## **Discerning the Spirits**

It should be observed that—in many pagan religious ceremonies—spiritual ecstasy and ecstatic utterances are an integral part of the religious ritual. *In and of itself, therefore, ecstatic utterance affords absolutely no proof of the presence of the Holy Spirit.* Very often, it is associated either with emotional frenzy, or with demonic spirits (or both)—*but not always*. This fact must be emphasised, lest we should be found guilty of maligning the Spirit of God. Discernment must be applied to each individual case, and the spirits must be tested in the light of God’s Word.

In case of doubt, let us remember the words of Scripture:

1 Corinthians 12:3

<sup>(3)</sup> Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and *that* no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

Those who do not honour Christ as Lord by what they say and by how they live, clearly are not speaking by the Holy Spirit. Their speech and lives contradicts any claim to know Christ as Lord. Their words, therefore, must be disregarded. However, where it is clearly evident that a person is honouring Christ as Lord—both by what he says, and by how he lives—and provided that this person has not been led astray by false or erroneous doctrine, then this person's spiritual gift must be acknowledged as God-given. And, if God-given, it must be recognised by the church. This, of course, assumes that the gift is being used only in accordance with the principles of God's Word: namely, for the upbuilding of the church in love; for the benefit of believers (and unbelievers where appropriate), and—above all—for the glory of God. Thus, the apostle Paul says:

1 Thessalonians 5:19-22

<sup>(19)</sup> Quench not the Spirit.

<sup>(20)</sup> Despise not prophesyings.

<sup>(21)</sup> Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

<sup>(22)</sup> Abstain from all appearance of evil.

And, the apostle John says:

1 John 4:1-3a

<sup>(1)</sup> Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. <sup>(2)</sup> Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: <sup>(3a)</sup> And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God...

As has been stated previously, God's Spirit does not now impart the gift of inspiration. Inspiration was necessary in order to exclude any possibility of error from the verbal declarations of God's prophets and apostles when acting in their official capacity as God's spokesmen. The gift of inspiration was given to prophets and apostles while the canon of Scripture remained incomplete. In addition, the individuals whom God appointed to speak authoritatively in his name demonstrated their commission from God by their ability to perform miraculous signs and wonders. With the closure of the canon of Scripture, however, there is no longer any need for prophets or apostles in the Old or New Testament sense of the words.

However, the principle of discernment that—in the above passage—was to be applied in respect of prophecy may be applied equally to other gifts of the Holy Spirit. This would include 'prophecy', as it is sometimes called today—if by 'prophecy' is meant no more than proclaiming God's Word to the people. This office, however, is more accurately referred to as preaching and teaching—gifts that are required for the public ministry of the Word.

If, however, a God-given gift is being abused or misused, then those who are spiritual in the church must point out to the believer concerned what God's Word requires of him in regard to the proper exercise of his or her gift. There must be no disorder or disharmony in the church of God. On the contrary, God's gifts must be used for unifying and edifying the church of Christ, for strengthening others in their faith, and in their knowledge of the Word of God, and in the fellowship of prayer, praise and

thanksgiving.



## Part 4

### ***The Work of the Holy Spirit***

#### **The Gifts of the Spirit**

##### ***Preliminary Remarks Regarding the Gifts of the Spirit***

Some important point should be noted concerning spiritual gifts:

1. The *gifts* of the Spirit must not be confused with the *fruit* of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit, which is love, joy, peace etc., is required of all believers. However, the gifts of the Spirit are separately apportioned to each individual believer. It is more important to produce the fruit of the Spirit than it is to possess the gifts of the Spirit.

(1 Cor. 13: 1-13; Gal. 5: 22, 23)

2. Not all believers are given the same gift or gifts. Rather, each believer is given a different gift or gifts. The Spirit grants that gift which is most appropriate to the service that will be required of that person, both in relation to the church and in relation to the world.

(1 Cor. 12: 4-11; Eph. 4: 7)

3. Not all believers are expected to possess any one particular gift of the Spirit. As each member or organ of the physical body performs a different bodily function, so each member of the spiritual body (the body of Christ) performs a different spiritual function. Again, no two members or organs of the body are exactly alike. The left hand is not identical to the right hand, and the foot does not have from the same functions as the eye. So it is with spiritual gifts. They are different: but the healthy and harmonious operation of all the individual parts or members are necessary to the welfare of the entire body; that is, the church.

(Rom. 12: 4-8; 1 Cor. 12: 12-31)

4. The gift of healing is the gift of being able to effect healing instantaneously in the name of Lord. Healing must also be permanent and complete for the particular condition for which it has been effected. Anyone claiming to possess the gift of healing must be able to heal in the manner described in the Bible. Any form of healing that does not conform to the Biblical pattern has no connection with the Biblical gift of healing.

(Acts 3: 6-8, 16; 9: 32-35)

5. The gift of tongues mean the gift of being able to speak in a foreign language—a language that has not been learned previously. This gift was essential for the universal spread of the Gospel in the early church. Ecstatic utterance is not the same as the gift of tongues, and is a temporary effect sometimes accompanying certain spiritual gifts. The gift (not the accompanying effect) is the quality or ability that is to be used to the glory of God.

(Num. 11: 23-29; Joel 2: 28; Mark 16: 17, 18; Acts 2: 1-11; 19: 6)

## Gifts and Experiences Are Not the Same

When the Holy Spirit bestows a spiritual gift, it is for the common good of the church, and for the upbuilding of the church in love. The neglect of this principle leads to the kind of errors that were being practised by the church at Corinth. Some of the Corinthian believers had apparently experienced ecstatic utterance when they had received their spiritual gifts. Because of this experience, they were placing stress on the *secondary effects* of God's gifts, instead of using their *primary gifts* to the glory of God and for the benefit of believers and unbelievers alike.

Again, some of these believers were insisting that everyone should have the same kind of spiritual experience as they had had—instead of recognising that the Holy Spirit is sovereign, and that he dispenses his various gifts individually to whom he will.

We will now consider individually some of the various gifts of the Spirit, and the purpose for which they are given to the people of God.

## Meaning of the Word, 'Grace' (*Charis*)

The Word 'grace' is derived from the Greek word, χάρις, (*charis*). From 'charis', we get the related words 'charisma' and 'charismatic'. The word 'charis' or its derivatives are used in reference to God's work of sovereign grace, which is effected through the Holy Spirit when he effectually calls a sinner to Christ. Again, this word (*charis*, or *grace*) is used in reference to the bestowal of salvation and all its benefits upon God's people. Additionally, it is used in reference to the work of the Holy Spirit in equipping God's people for works of service, by giving them particular and appropriate spiritual gifts.

The Holy Spirit grants to all believers specific gifts, talents or abilities to equip each one for service within the church of God, and to prepare him or her for future tasks in the Lord's name. (Rom. 12: 6-8.) At the moment, however, we are not considering natural talent or abilities so much as spiritual gifts. Frequently, however, both types of gifts may be conjoined in the Lord's service.

## Diversity of Gifts

1 Corinthians 14:12

<sup>(12)</sup> Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual *gifts*, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.

The gifts of the Spirit vary in nature, and not all believers should be in possession of the same spiritual gifts. The Holy Spirit distributes to each believer the gift that God deems appropriate. All gifts are given for the mutual edification or upbuilding of the church in love. No gift is given that cannot be of some spiritual and practical benefit. God is not the God of confusion and disorder, but of peace and harmony. (1 Cor. chs. 12-14.)

The human body is a unit; but it is a unit consisting of many different parts. Within the unity of the body, these parts perform a variety of different—but interrelated and essential—functions. Only when the individual parts of the body are functioning together in harmony, can the life and development of the body be sustained. So it is with the body of Christ, the church. The Spirit of God apportions his gifts individually to whom he will, so that each child of God will be properly equipped to perform a particular—but essential and interrelated—function within the church. Thus, concerning the various functions within the body of Christ (the church) the Scripture says:

1 Corinthians 12:12-13

<sup>(12)</sup> For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also *is* Christ. <sup>(13)</sup> For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

All share in the Holy Spirit who have been baptised by the Spirit—i.e., spiritually baptised or born

again—into the fellowship of God's church.

### **Specific Gifts**

Within the fellowship of the church, the Spirit of God equips each believer with an appropriate gift or gifts—dispensing them, as he pleases, to whom he will—for the glory of God, and for the upbuilding of the church in love. Thus, the Scripture says:

Romans 12:6-8

<sup>(6)</sup> Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, *let us prophesy* according to the proportion of faith; <sup>(7)</sup> Or ministry, *let us wait* on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; <sup>(8)</sup> Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, *let him do it* with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.

And again, God's Word says:

1 Corinthians 12:12-13

<sup>(12)</sup> For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also *is* Christ. <sup>(13)</sup> For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:27-31

<sup>(27)</sup> Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. <sup>(28)</sup> And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. <sup>(29)</sup> *Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? <sup>(30)</sup> Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? <sup>(31)</sup> But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way.*

And, in his epistle to the Ephesian church, the apostle Paul says:

Ephesians 4:7-8

<sup>(7)</sup> But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

<sup>(8)</sup> Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. *{Psalm 68:18}*

Ephesians 4:11-12

<sup>(11)</sup> And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; <sup>(12)</sup> For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

Specific gifts are given to specific individuals within the church to fulfil specific purposes in the plan of God and to help build up the church of God. The Giver is the Lord, acting through the agency of his Holy Spirit. Gifts are wide-ranging; but each is intended to complement others.

### **Love Is Greater Than All**

Love is not said to be a gift of the Spirit. Rather, it is the principal *fruit* of the Spirit. Nor is love confined to feelings of emotion. Much more importantly, love is duty—the duty to love God and to love our neighbour as ourselves—whether we feel like loving them or not.

Involved in our duty to love God is to offer to him everything that we are and have, to praise and honour him with all of our being, and to serve him faithfully all of our lives. Involved in our duty to love our neighbour as ourselves, is to treat our neighbour as we would treat ourselves, to offer them whatever help, comfort, or assistance that they require, and which we can provide, and to show love and compassion toward them for Christ's sake.

Without love, all the gifts of the Spirit and all the sacrifices that we offer to God are utterly to no avail. In the fellowship of God's church, love must reign supreme (1 Cor. 13: 1-13). Again, the breaking of bread, the fellowship of prayer, and the ministry of the Word, must be given pre-eminence over the exercise of spiritual gifts. Thus, the Scripture says:

Ephesians 4:2-6

<sup>(2)</sup> With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; <sup>(3)</sup> Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. <sup>(4)</sup> *There is one body*, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; <sup>(5)</sup> One Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>(6)</sup> One God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.

Whatever spiritual gift or gifts may be bestowed, the exercise of that gift must be made in a spirit of humility and from a heart of love. Without these, our gifts will divide—rather than unite—the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **The Holy Spirit Equips for Service**

Exodus 31:3

<sup>(3)</sup> And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship,

When God calls and commissions his people to a specific form of service, he equips them with those gifts that will be necessary to carry out that service. The Spirit of God may make use of current (God-given) talents or abilities; or he may augment these talent or abilities with additional spiritual gifts. The Lord will provide whatever may be required for a specific form of service. The Lord does not call anyone to his service, or to a particular office, unless that person is properly prepared and equipped to serve in that capacity or that office. For instance, during his sojourn in the desert, God appointed his servant Bezalel (or Bezaleel) to function as a wise and skilled craftsman in constructing the Tent of Meeting. Thus, the Scripture says:

Exodus 31:1-5

<sup>(1)</sup> And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying, <sup>(2)</sup> See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: <sup>(3)</sup> And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, <sup>(4)</sup> To devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, <sup>(5)</sup> And in cutting of stones, to set *them*, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship.

Although Bezalel was a master craftsman, the Spirit of God gave to him his outstanding wisdom, knowledge, skill and ability. Thus, it can be seen that spiritual gifts can include such natural or acquired skills and abilities as this man possessed, and was able to use in God's service. By filling Bezalel with the Holy Spirit, the Lord had commissioned this man to work in God's service, directly under the control of the Lord.

### **Filled With the Spirit**

To be filled with the Spirit is to be completely under the Holy Spirit's control, so that his gifts are used as God intended and to his glory. It means that our lives must be fully committed to Christ and wholly yielded to the sanctifying power of his Holy Spirit. Again, it means that our lives must not be used for

selfish purposes, but only for the purpose that God intended. To be filled with the Spirit of God is to be given over completely to the Lord, to follow his plans, and to exercise our gifts for his glory.

There can, of course, be no filling with the Spirit unless our lives have been previously emptied and cleansed of anything and everything that comes between the Spirit of the Lord—who is the Spirit of holiness—and us. God never uses an unclean or impure vessel in the service of the sanctuary. Nor does he use a vessel that is partly filled with other things. The vessels of the Lord must be dedicated wholly to the service of the Lord—in body and soul. Thus, in connection with service, the Scripture says:

Luke 1:15

<sup>(15)</sup> For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. (See also vv. 16-17)

Acts 6:5b

<sup>(5b)</sup> ...and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost... (See also v.3)

### ***Filled with Fullness in Christ***

In Christ, every believer is complete. Nothing can be added to his salvation; and spiritual gifts to do not any sense augment our salvation or improve upon it. This would be impossible, for our salvation cannot be augmented by gifts, nor is improvement either possible or necessary. Concerning our complete fullness in Christ, the Scripture says:

Colossians 2:9-10

<sup>(9)</sup> For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. <sup>(10)</sup> And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

### ***Filled with all the Fullness of God***

The Scripture's also speak of being filled with God. Thus, the apostle Paul prays or the Ephesian believers:

Ephesians 3:17-19

<sup>(17)</sup> That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, <sup>(18)</sup> May be able to comprehend with all saints what *is* the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; <sup>(19)</sup> And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.

There are, therefore, several shades of meaning associated with the terms, *'filled'* and *'the fullness'*. But, they all amount to being totally dedicated to God, consecrated to Christ, and yielded to the Holy Spirit. Dedication, consecration and submission are necessary elements in a life of trust and obedience, and of continuing progress in sanctification and service.

### **Withdrawal of the Holy Spirit**

Withdrawal of the Holy Spirit relates to the removal of Spirit-given gifts or offices. It does not relate to, nor does it imply, the withdrawal of the indwelling Holy Spirit in sanctification or in any other aspect of the believer's eternal salvation.

### ***Withdrawal of Gifts Due to Unconfessed Sin***

As a result of unconfessed sin in a believer's life, that believer may forfeit some of the blessings or responsibilities granted to him by the Holy Spirit. This may happen in the sense that the gifts with

which the Spirit of God has equipped him, or the office to which the Spirit of God has called him, may be taken from him. Thus, King Saul—who was equipped by the Spirit of God for by this regal office— forfeited this gift because of his sin. The Holy Spirit was taken from him, and his authority and ability to act as God’s vice-regent and to function as a king over God’s people was removed. Thus, God’s Word says:

1 Samuel 16:14

<sup>(14)</sup> But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him.

Saul had forfeited his spiritual gifts because he had failed to obey fully the command of the LORD.

Similarly, King David prayed to God that the Holy Spirit would not be taken from him because of his adultery with Bathsheba and his responsibility for the murder of Bathsheba’s husband, Uriah. Thus, David prays:

Psalms 51:11

<sup>(11)</sup> Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.

David was not in fear of losing his eternal salvation, but he was in great fear of losing his sense of God’s immediate presence, and also the gift that God had bestowed upon him to enable him to act as the divinely appointed ruler of God’s people. Without this gift, David could not have continued to rule, and he must have had in mind what had happened to his predecessor, King Saul, when God’s Spirit was taken from him.

#### ***Withdrawal of Gifts Due to Neglect***

Each of God’s people is given a specific gift or gifts. The Holy Spirit equips the people of God for various types of work that are related—directly or indirectly—to the service of the church and to the building up of the church of God in love.

The apostle Paul reminded Timothy to stir up the gift that was in him. This was the gift that God’s Holy Spirit had bestowed upon Timothy in order that he might function effectively within the church of God, and that his spiritual gift might be used for God’s glory (but not for self-glorification). Thus, in his first epistle to Timothy, the apostle Paul says:

1 Timothy 4:13-14,16

<sup>(13)</sup> Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

<sup>(14)</sup> Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery...

<sup>(16)</sup> Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

And again, in his second epistle to Timothy, Paul says:

2 Timothy 1:6-8

<sup>(6)</sup> Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. <sup>(7)</sup> For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. <sup>(8)</sup> Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God;

However, if the people of God do not apply the specific gift or gifts with which the Holy Spirit has

equipped them, then there is a strong possibility that these gifts may be withdrawn. If we will not be faithful with the gifts that God gives us, then God may withdraw these gifts and apportion his gifts to someone else. For, unlike salvation, which is an unconditional gift and cannot be revoked, the gifts of the Spirit are conditional gifts: That is, they are gifts or blessings that can be taken away if they are not being used as God intended, or if they are not being fully employed in the service of God.

Concerning the man to whom God had appointed one talent, but who had failed to make good use of this one talent, the Lord declares:

Matthew 25:26,28-30

<sup>(26)</sup> His lord answered and said unto him, *Thou* wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strewed...

<sup>(28)</sup> Take therefore the talent from him, and give *it* unto him which hath ten talents. <sup>(29)</sup> For unto everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. <sup>(30)</sup> And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

### ***Withdrawal of Gifts Due to Abuse or Misuse***

If the Holy Spirit bestows a particular gift on an individual, and that gift is abused or misused in some way, then corrective discipline may be applied by the Lord. If, however, the Lord's servant fails to respond to a lesser discipline, then he may expect a greater. Sooner or later, the gift that he has been given may be withdrawn. For God does not bestow his gifts in order that they may be treated lightly, or used with selfish motives or for sinful purposes. Thus, God's Word warns:

Luke 12:47-48

<sup>(47)</sup> And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not *himself*, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*. <sup>(48)</sup> But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few *stripes*. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

Those who do not apply God's gifts properly, or who misuse or abuse them, will—like the unfaithful steward—suffer the punishment due to their misapplication or misuse of the Holy Spirit's gifts.

### **Called To Serve**

It is an inestimable privilege to be called to the service of the Lord—and, in one way or another, every believer receives this vocation. The Lord will hold each one of us accountable for the way in which we have endeavoured to serve him, and for the manner in which we have used his gifts. There will be rewards in heaven for every faithful servant, but there will also be loss of reward for every unfaithful servant.

Let us, then, receive with gratitude and humility whatever gift the Spirit of God sees fit to bestow upon us, and let us use that gift to the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ who loved us, and who redeemed us to himself as his own precious possession.

