

## The Operational Role of the Holy Spirit

Last week we began this series of messages about the Holy Spirit. We can hardly talk about the Christian life, experience the reality of God, or live a Christian life without the Holy Spirit. Perhaps the most important thing we can do this year is invite the Holy Spirit into our church and lives. Unfortunately, He is the one Person of the Holy Trinity least understood by many Christians, and we are the poorer for it. **The Holy Spirit is a real person**, not a general cosmic force. He is the real presence of Jesus and God the Father with us. He is co-eternal with the Father and the Son. From the beginning, from the creation of the world to the creation of the Church, the Holy Spirit has been active as God Himself.

### There At The Beginning

The first mention of Him is in Genesis 1:2 where it relates that, *Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.* To the formlessness the Spirit gave form and order and then life.. Psalm 104 praises God for the beauty of creation and catalogues all the animals that look to God for sustenance and to the HS's continuing role in giving life on this earth: ***When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground, Psalm 104:30.***

When the human was formed ... *the LORD God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being*, Gen. 2:7. The Bible testifies to this truth: *The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life*, Job 33:4.

The HS was active before the world began. In the OT we read how He guided the people Israel through judges, prophets, and kings. **The HS came upon some: *Then the Spirit of God came on Zechariah son of Jehoiada the priest, 2 Chron. 24:20.*** He **rested** on some: ***Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke with him [Moses], and he [God] took some of the power of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders. When the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied... Numbers 11:25.*** He **filled** some: ***Then the LORD said to Moses, "See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills..." Exodus 31:1-3.***<sup>1</sup>

The HS was active in men and women to deliver Israel from their enemies and faithlessness. But God's greatest deliverance came with the Messiah that the prophet Isaiah foretold. He predicted that the Messiah would say, *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, Because the Lord has anointed me..."* Isaiah 61:1. Jesus, read these very words of Isaiah in the synagogue of His home town and said, *"Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing"* Luke 4:21.<sup>2</sup>

### There At Bethlehem

The four gospels tell us how the work of the HS centered around the Person of Jesus Christ. **Jesus was begotten of the Spirit.** An angel of the Lord came to Mary saying: ***"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will over-shadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God," Luke 1:35.*** Though modern people scoff at this in disbelief, as did Mary herself, the angel dispelled doubt saying, *"For nothing will be impossible with God,"* Luke 1:37. God is Creator of the universe, the "natural laws," so God has limitless power and can do what He intends at all times.<sup>3</sup>

Jesus was baptized by the Spirit: Then John gave this testimony: *“I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit,’* John 1:32-33.

Jesus was led by the Spirit: *Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil,* Luke 4:1.

Jesus was anointed by the Spirit: Peter testified ... how *God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him,* Acts 10:38.

Jesus was empowered by the Spirit: *But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you,* Matt. 12:28.<sup>4</sup> Jesus promised to His disciples this same power of the Spirit of God and that they would do greater things than He.

### Here In Bakersfield

The HS is given to Christians in Bakersfield and at FUMC to help them truly live as Jesus directs and to obey His commandments. As Jesus promised: ... *the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.* John 14:26. Here's:

1. Reach the Lost. *“... go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”* Matt. 28:18-20. The atoning work of Jesus on the cross is foundational to all we believe as Christians. This is the good news He asks us to share with the world. It takes more than a theological statement to reach the lost. It takes Holy Spirit power. He is the operational driving force. Jesus told His disciples that only if He goes away will the “Helper” come (John 16:7). This is the advantage of the Holy Spirit. For the purpose of evangelism, the immediate presence of the HS is more important than the immediate presence of Jesus. The more we have the Holy Spirit the more we'll evangelize and be effective at it.<sup>5</sup>

Why do we need the HS to share the gospel? Think about it. Jesus said: *“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it,”* Matt. 7:13-14. The fact that there is a highway to hell and only a stairway to heaven clues you in on what to expect in terms of traffic either way. It's a tough task, and we're hesitant to do it, so we need supernatural power to overcome our natural reluctance to speak His name and people's natural resistance to the gospel.

2. Love One Another. Jesus said: *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another,”* John 13:34. Now that's a tall order! The Body of Christ is made up of those who come to faith in Christ, but they don't choose the other members of Christ's Body. There are bound to be disagreements and personality clashes. We're still fallen, sinful creatures, still being made holy. Yet Jesus commanded us to love even the folks we don't like. We need supernatural power to do that! The HS is that power - He empowers us to love one another and shows us how. Jesus' command to love one another is repeated by Peter, James, John, and Paul in their letters in the N.T. The command was taken to heart by all Christians. Jesus prayed to the Father that His followers would be one with Him and one with each other: *I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me,* John 17:23.

Do you have a problem with someone in the congregation? **Pray for the HS to fill you so that you may love that person the way Jesus does.** It is here that the HS can do His work of transforming our souls and psyches into His likeness, that the new creation may be regenerated in us.<sup>6</sup> In this way you will be cultivating the fruit of the Spirit in your soul.

3. **Walk in the Spirit.** *Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit, Gal. 5:25.* Too often Christians unconsciously think a walk in the Spirit is Sunday morning as they walk down the aisle at church, or maybe attending a church retreat. But Paul here is talking about what Jesus meant for His disciples: that the HS be our constant companion throughout all our days and relationships. Christians live through the same challenges, tragedies, triumphs, and defeats that all other humans live through. "The daily life and witness of a Spirit-filled Christian was not marked by exemptions from the laws of nature but by an unlikeness to the world in matters of the heart."<sup>7</sup> We think we can walk through it all just fine but we miss what God can do through us. In our (FUMC) chapel we sing words from the prophet Isaiah at the close of each Sunday worship: *...those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.* Isaiah 40:31. Everyone wants to soar as an eagle or run fast. We want the HS to give us today victories over our sins and brokenness, healing in all our relationships, miracles in our ministry, and immediate conversions when we share the gospel. But the norm is to walk and that's a lot harder than running or flying. The NT records how the HS worked signs and wonders, miracle healings and happenings, through the disciples ... and those things still occur today. But they do not occur every day. They occur according to God's purposes.

At great crises in life and most especially in the spiritual life, many believers will experience His holy presence and proper emotional excitement. But no one can make their life one continual crisis. "Most of the New Testament was written for Christians who would need to brace themselves to the call of the road, which would constitute the remainder of their lives. To walk by faith was their normal method.<sup>8</sup> So, we like the early Christians, must learn to walk in the power of the HS. **When the HS dwells in a Christian he or she becomes a temple for the living God** that God's glory may shine forth in their living. **Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other, Galatians 5:23-26.**

4. **Pray in the Spirit.** The Holy Spirit prompts receptive believers to pray. Yes, just as the old spiritual sings "Every time I feel the Spirit moving in my heart, I will pray..." (hymnal #404). Whether I know who or what to pray for, or how, when I pray as the Spirit prompts I am moving into partnership with our heavenly Father and fulfilling Jesus' prayer for His disciples: *that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.* John 17:21.

**The Holy Spirit prays for us even when don't know how to pray. ... the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans, Rom. 8:26.** The next time you think about someone, or get a nudge about some situation, stop and pray. You can say, "Holy Spirit, help me to pray. I sense you prompting me to intercede for ... I want to cooperate with you, help me to pray."<sup>9</sup> *Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father," Gal. 4:6.*

Prayer in the Spirit is an assault on the evil one led by our King, Jesus Christ. **When we pray in the Spirit we are doing battle with the one who is an interloper** who encroaches in any life, any home, any business, and city, and land - to crowd out by whatever tactic (subtle or bold) God's inheritance for that person or people.<sup>10</sup> God has outlined a purpose for each person - a purpose consistent with God's likeness and nature. Satan, like a stalking snake intent on his sleeping prey, slowly coils around it until it is smothered. The serpent slowly winds its coils around hearts, and crushes them; around

homes, and crumbles them; around leaders, and breaks them; around enterprises, and smashes them; around lands, and brings reproach upon them.<sup>11</sup> Satan keeps trying to encroach on God's designs and only succeeds in the measure that we allow. Each of us has a choice as to who will influence us.

The Holy Spirit gives us strength to resist the devil and also to make war upon the evil one and push back his ill-gotten territory. But ours is not a personal vendetta nor cruel bloodshed for it is a spiritual battle for the hearts of men and women. *The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.* 2 Cor. 10:4-5.

The world may look like it's going to hell, and that's because Satan is loose in the world and has his grip on so many people. But he will not prevail against Jesus and his church (Matt. 16:18). Fear not for ... *the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world, I John 3:20.* Holy Spirit directed prayer is greater than mere religiosity. When believers are willing to pray as the Spirit leads, Satan is driven back and the kingdom of God advances.

### Operational Power

One can easily become frustrated about following Jesus every day - frustrated because we always fall short. *The Holy Spirit is the operational power for living as God's own child.* We must invite Him to walk alongside us each day. It is necessary to read the Bible, study it, take it in. Yet no amount of learning can substitute for living by the operational power of the Holy Spirit.

*For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.* Romans 8:14-16.

One last thing: we can talk all we want about the Spirit, but what is necessary is to talk to Him ... invite Him into our lives and living. So let us pray ...

### CHAPEL & 8:30

*Father God, we understand that aging is just a part of life. But we thank You that the Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead is willing to come and live in us. Come now Holy Spirit and give life to my body and mind. Holy Spirit you are my anti-aging friend. Even now quicken my mortal being with Your resurrection power. Amen.* (Romans 8:11).

### RENEW

*Come Holy Spirit and be the love of God in our hearts. Our ability to love is limited. Yours is unlimited. Let this love be the motivation for all we do for You. Let us touch someone today with Your love that they may know and experience the great love You have for them. Flow through me to them as a conduit of compassion. Thank You. Amen.* (Romans 5:5; Gal. 5:22).

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<sup>1</sup> Billy Graham, *The Holy Spirit, Activating God's Power in Your Life*, (1988, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, TN), 17.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 17-18.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 18-19.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>5</sup> C. Peter Wagner, *Seven Principles That I Didn't Learn in Seminary*, (2000: Wagner Pub. Colorado Springs, CO), 16-17, 20.

<sup>6</sup> Donald Gee, *Pentecostal Experience, The Writings of Donald Gee*; David A. Womack, Ed. (1993, Gospel Publishing House, Springfield, MO), 67-68.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 67.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 67.

<sup>9</sup> Jack Hayford, *Prayer is Invading the Impossible*, Logos International, 1977; 126.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 131.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 131.