



John 16: 7 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. 8 And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; 10 concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; 11 concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. 12 "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. 14 He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. 15 All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

Week 23 – “The Purpose of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit”

We may define the work of the Holy Spirit as follows:

The work of the Holy Spirit is to **manifest** the active presence of God in the world, and especially in the church.

Manifest

adjective

1. readily perceived by the eye or the understanding; evident; obvious; apparent; plain: "a manifest error."

verb (used with object)

3. to make clear or evident to the eye or the understanding; show plainly: "He manifested his approval with a hearty laugh."

4. to prove; put beyond doubt or question: "The evidence manifests the guilt of the defendant."

This definition indicates that the Holy Spirit is the member of the Trinity whom the Scripture most often represents as being present to do God's work in the world.

Although this is true to some extent throughout the Bible, it is particularly true in the new covenant age.

In the Old Testament, the presence of God was many times manifested in the glory of God and in theophanies, and in the gospels Jesus himself manifested the presence of God among men.

But after Jesus ascended into heaven, and continuing through the entire church age, the Holy Spirit is now the primary manifestation of the presence of the Trinity among us. He is the one who is most prominently present with us now.

From the very beginning of creation we have an indication that the Holy Spirit's work is to complete and sustain what God the Father has planned and what God the Son has begun.

Genesis 1: 2, "the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters." And at Pentecost, with the beginning of the new creation in Christ, it is the Holy Spirit who comes to grant power to the church (Acts 1: 8; 2: 4, 17–18).

Synopsis:

We can distinguish four aspects of the work of the Holy Spirit to bring evidence of God's presence and to bless:

- (1) the Holy Spirit empowers
- (2) the Holy Spirit purifies
- (3) the Holy Spirit reveals
- (4) the Holy Spirit unifies

We will examine each of these four activities below. Finally, we must recognize that these activities of the Holy Spirit are not to be taken for granted, and they do not just happen automatically among God's people.

Rather, the Holy Spirit reflects the pleasure or displeasure of God with the faith and obedience— or unbelief and disobedience— of God's people. Because of this, we need to look at a fifth aspect of the Holy Spirit's activity:

- (5) the Holy Spirit gives stronger or weaker evidence of the presence and blessing of God, according to our response to him.

1. The Holy Spirit Empowers

A. He Gives Life. In the realm of nature it is the role of the Holy Spirit to give life to all animate creatures, whether on the ground or in the sky and sea, for “When you send forth your Spirit, they are created” (Ps. 104: 30).

Conversely, if God “should take back his spirit to himself, and gather to himself his breath, all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust” (Job 34: 14– 15).

Here we see the role of the Spirit in the giving and sustaining of human and animal life.

Parallel with this is the role of the Holy Spirit to give us new life in regeneration .

Jesus told Nicodemus, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born anew’ ” (John 3: 6– 7; cf. vv. 5, 8; 6: 63 ; 2 Cor. 3: 6) .

He also said, “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing” (John 6: 63, 2 Cor. 3: 6; Acts 10: 44– 47; Titus 3: 5).

Consistent with this life-giving function of the Holy Spirit is the fact that it was the Holy Spirit who conceived Jesus in the womb of Mary his mother (Matt . 1: 18 , 20; Luke 1: 35).

And on the day when Christ returns, it is the same Holy Spirit who will complete this life-giving work by giving new resurrection life to our mortal bodies: “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you” (Rom. 8: 11).

B. He Gives Power for Service.

Old Testament:

In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit frequently empowered people for special service. He empowered Joshua with leadership skills and wisdom (Num. 27: 18; Deut. 34: 9), and empowered the judges to deliver Israel from their oppressors (note how “the Spirit of the LORD came upon” Othniel in Judg. 3: 10, Gideon in 6: 34, Jephthah in 11: 29, and Samson in 13: 25; 14: 6, 19; 15: 14).

The Holy Spirit came mightily upon Saul to arouse him to battle against the enemies of Israel (1 Sam. 11: 6), and when David was anointed as king, “the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward” (1 Sam. 16: 13), equipping David to fulfill the task of kingship to which God had called him.

In a slightly different kind of empowering, the Holy Spirit endowed Bezalel with artistic skills for the construction of the tabernacle and its equipment (Ex. 31: 3; 35: 31), and with the ability to teach these skills to others (Ex. 35: 34).

The Holy Spirit also protected God's people and enabled them to overcome their enemies. For example, God put his Spirit in the midst of them at the time of the exodus (Isa. 63: 11– 12) and later, after their return from exile, put his Spirit in the midst of them to protect them and keep them from fear (Hag. 2: 5).

When Saul was attempting to capture David by force, the Holy Spirit came upon Saul's messengers (1 Sam. 19: 20) and eventually upon Saul himself (v. 23), causing them involuntarily to fall to the ground and to prophesy for hours , thus defeating Saul's purpose and humiliating him in response to his malicious show of force against David and Samuel.

Finally, the Old Testament predicted a time when the Holy Spirit would anoint a Servant-Messiah in great fullness and power: And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. (Isa. 11: 2– 3) Isaiah prophesied that God would say of this coming Servant , "I have put my Spirit upon him" (Isa. 42: 1), and he himself would say, "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me" (Isa. 61: 1; cf. Luke 4: 18).

New Testament:

The Spirit Empowers Jesus

The empowering work of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament is seen first and most fully in his anointing and empowering of Jesus as the Messiah. The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus at his baptism (Matt. 3: 16; Mark 1: 11; Luke 3: 22).

John the Baptist said, "I saw the Spirit descend as a dove from heaven, and it remained on him" (John 1: 32). Therefore Jesus entered into the temptation in the wilderness "full of the Holy Spirit" (Luke 4: 1), and after his temptation, at the beginning of his ministry, "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee" (Luke 4: 14).

When Jesus came to preach in the synagogue at Nazareth, he declared that Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled in himself: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4: 18– 19).

The power of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' life was then seen in his subsequent miracles, as he cast out demons with a word and healed all who came to him (Luke 4: 36, 40– 41). The Holy Spirit was pleased to dwell in Jesus and empower him, for he fully delighted in the absolute moral purity of Jesus' life.

In the context of talking about his own ministry , and the Father's blessing on that ministry, Jesus says, "It is not by measure that he gives the Spirit; the Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand" (John 3: 34– 35).

Jesus had an anointing of the Holy Spirit without measure, and this anointing "remained on him" (John 1: 32; cf. Acts 10: 38).

The Spirit Empowers the Disciples

The Holy Spirit also empowered Jesus' disciples for various kinds of ministry. Jesus had promised them, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1: 8).

In general, we can say that the Holy Spirit speaks through the gospel message as it is effectively proclaimed to people's hearts. The New Testament ends with an invitation from both the Holy Spirit and the church, who together call people to salvation: "The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come.' And let him who hears say, 'Come'" (Rev. 22: 17).

In fact, not only in the preaching of the gospel message, but also in the reading and teaching of Scripture, the Holy Spirit continues to speak to people's hearts each day (see Heb. 3: 7 and 10: 15, where the author quotes an Old Testament passage and says that the Holy Spirit is now speaking that passage to his readers).

Another aspect of empowering Christians for service is the Holy Spirit's activity of giving spiritual gifts to equip Christians for ministry .

After listing a variety of spiritual gifts, Paul says, "But one and the same Spirit works all these things , distributing to each one individually just as He wills" (1 Cor. 12: 11).

Since the Holy Spirit is the one who shows or manifests God's presence in the world, it is not surprising that Paul can call spiritual gifts "manifestations" of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12: 7).

When spiritual gifts are active, it is another indication of the presence of God the Holy Spirit in the church.

In the prayer lives of individual believers, we find that the Holy Spirit empowers prayer and makes it effective. "We do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words" (Rom. 8: 26).

And Paul says that we "have access in one Spirit to the Father" (Eph. 2: 18).

One specific kind of prayer that the New Testament says is empowered by the Holy Spirit is the gift of prayer in tongues (1 Cor. 12: 10– 11; 14: 2, 14– 17).

Yet another aspect of the Holy Spirit's work in empowering Christians for service is empowering people to overcome spiritual opposition to the preaching of the gospel and to God's work in people's lives.

This power in spiritual warfare was first seen in the life of Jesus, who said, "If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matt . 12: 28).

When Paul came to Cyprus he encountered opposition from Elymas the magician, but he, "filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, 'You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind and unable to see the sun for a time.' Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand " (Acts 13: 9 –11).

The gift of "distinguishing between spirits" (1 Cor. 12: 10), given by the Holy Spirit, is also to be a tool in this warfare against the forces of darkness, as is the Word of God, which functions as the "sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6: 17) in spiritual conflict.

2. The Holy Spirit Purifies

Since this member of the Trinity is called the Holy Spirit, it is not surprising to find that one of his primary activities is to cleanse us from sin and to "sanctify us" or make us more holy in actual conduct of life.

Even in the lives of unbelievers there is some restraining influence of the Holy Spirit as he convicts the world of sin (John 16: 8– 11; Acts 7: 51).

But when people become Christians the Holy Spirit does an initial cleansing work in them, making a decisive break with the patterns of sin that were in their lives before.

Paul says of the Corinthians, "You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6: 11; see also Titus 3: 5).

This cleansing and purifying work of the Holy Spirit is apparently what is symbolized by the metaphor of fire when John the Baptist says that Jesus will baptize people "with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Matt. 3: 11; Luke 3: 16).

After the initial break with sin that the Holy Spirit brings about in our lives at conversion, he also produces in us growth in holiness of life.

He brings forth the "fruit of the Spirit" within us ("love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control," Gal. 5: 22– 23), those qualities that reflect the character of God. As we continually "are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another," we should be reminded that "this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3: 18).

Sanctification comes by the power of the Holy Spirit (2 Thess. 2: 13; 1 Peter 1: 2; cf. Rom. 8: 4, 15– 16), so that it is “by the Spirit” that we are able to “put to death the deeds of the body” and grow in personal holiness (Rom. 8: 13; see 7: 6; Phil. 1: 19).

Some people today say a purifying (or healing) work of the Holy Spirit occurs when they are “slain in the spirit,” an experience in which they suddenly fall to the ground in a semi-conscious state and remain there for minutes or hours.

Although the phrase “slaying in the Spirit” is nowhere in Scripture, there are instances when people fell to the ground, or fell into a trance, in the presence of God.

Contemporary experiences should be evaluated according to what lasting results (“fruit”) they bear in people’s lives (see Matt. 7: 15– 20; 1 Cor. 14: 12, 26c).

3. The Holy Spirit Reveals

A. Revelation to Prophets and Apostles.

The whole of the Old Testament Scriptures came about because “men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1: 21 NIV).

Several other passages mention this work of the Holy Spirit in Old Testament prophets (Matt. 22: 43; Acts 1: 16; 4: 25; 28: 25; 1 Peter 1: 21).

The New Testament apostles and others who wrote words of New Testament Scripture were also guided “into all the truth” by the Holy Spirit (John 16: 13), who also spoke to the apostles what he heard from the Father and the Son, and declared to them “the things that are to come” (John 16: 3; cf. Eph. 3: 5).

Others who were filled with the Holy Spirit also spoke or sang words that became part of Scripture, such as Elizabeth (Luke 1: 41), Zechariah (Luke 1: 67), and Simeon (Luke 2: 25).

B. He Gives Evidence of God’s Presence.

Sometimes it has been said that the work of the Holy Spirit is not to call attention to Himself but rather to give glory to Jesus and to God the Father. But this seems to be a false dichotomy, not supported by Scripture. Of course the Holy Spirit does glorify Jesus (John 16: 14) and bear witness to him (John 15: 26; Acts 5: 32; 1 John 2: 3; 1 John 4: 2).

But this does not mean that he does not make his own actions and words known! The Bible has hundreds of verses talking about the work of the Holy Spirit, making his work known, and the Bible is itself spoken or inspired by the Holy Spirit!

Moreover, the Holy Spirit frequently made himself known by phenomena that indicated his activity, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament periods.

This was true when the Holy Spirit came upon the seventy elders with Moses and they prophesied (Num. 11: 25– 26), and when the Holy Spirit came upon the judges to enable them to do great works of power (Judg. 14: 6, 19; 15: 14, et al.).

In these instances people could see the effect of the Holy Spirit coming on the Lord's servants. This was also true when the Holy Spirit came mightily upon Saul and he prophesied with a band of prophets (1 Sam. 10: 6, 10), and it was frequently true when he empowered the Old Testament prophets to give public prophecies.

The Holy Spirit also made his presence evident in a visible way when he descended as a dove on Jesus (John 1: 32), or came as a sound of a rushing wind and with visible tongues of fire on the disciples at Pentecost (Acts 2: 2 –3).

In addition, when people had the Holy Spirit poured out on them and began to speak in tongues or praise God in a remarkable and spontaneous way (see Acts 2: 4; 10: 44– 46; 19: 6), the Holy Spirit certainly made his presence known as well.

And Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit within us would be so powerful he would be like a river of living water flowing out from our inmost beings (John 7: 39)— a simile that suggests that people would be aware of a presence that would somehow be perceptible.

In the lives of individual believers, the Holy Spirit does not entirely conceal his work, but makes Himself known in various ways.

He bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God (Rom. 8: 16), and cries, “Abba! Father!” (Gal. 4: 6).

He provides a guarantee or a down payment of our future fellowship with him in heaven (2 Cor. 1: 22; 5: 5), and reveals his desires to us so that we can be led by those desires and follow them (Rom. 8: 4– 16; Gal. 5: 16– 25).

He gives gifts that manifest his presence (1 Cor. 12: 7– 11).

And from time to time he works miraculous signs and wonders that strongly attest to the presence of God in the preaching of the gospel (Heb. 2: 4; cf. 1 Cor. 2: 4; Rom. 15: 19).

It seems more accurate, therefore, to say that although the Holy Spirit does glorify Jesus, he also frequently calls attention to his work and gives recognizable evidences that make his presence known.

Indeed, it seems that one of his primary purposes in the new covenant age is to manifest the presence of God, to give indications that make the presence of God known. And when the Holy Spirit works in various ways that can be perceived by believers and unbelievers, this encourages people's faith that God is near and that he is working to fulfill his purposes in the church and to bring blessing to his people.

C. He Guides and Directs God's People.

Scripture gives many examples of direct guidance from the Holy Spirit to various people. In fact, in the Old Testament, God said that it was sin for the people to enter into agreements with others when those agreements were “not of my Spirit” (Isa. 30: 1).

Apparently the people had been deciding on the basis of their own wisdom and common sense rather than seeking the guidance of God's Holy Spirit before they entered into such agreements.

In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness for his period of temptation (Matt. 4: 1; Luke 4: 1); in fact, so strong was this leading of the Holy Spirit that Mark can say that “The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness” (Mark 1: 12).

In other contexts the Holy Spirit gave direct words of guidance to people, saying to Philip, for example, “Go up and join this chariot” (Acts 8: 29), or telling Peter to go with three men who came to him from Cornelius' household (Acts 10: 19–20; 11: 12), or directing the Christians at Antioch, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them” (Acts 13: 2).

Also in the category of “giving guidance ,” but of a much more direct and compelling kind, are several examples where the Holy Spirit actually transported a person from one place to another. This was so when “the Spirit of the Lord caught up Philip; and the eunuch saw him no more. . . . But Philip was found at Azotus ” (Acts 8: 39 –40)— the guidance in this case could hardly have been more clear !

But similar things happened to some Old Testament prophets, for those who knew Elijah seemed to expect that the Spirit of God would snatch him up and transport him somewhere (1 Kings 18: 12; 2 Kings 2: 16: “It may be that the Spirit of the LORD has caught him up and cast him upon some mountain or into some valley”).

The Spirit of the Lord several times, Ezekiel says, “lifted me up” and brought him to one place or another (Ezek. 11: 1; 37: 1; 43: 5), an experience that was also part of John's later visions in Revelation (Rev. 17: 3; 21: 10). 17 But in the vast majority of cases the leading and guiding by the Holy Spirit is not nearly as dramatic as this.

Scripture talks rather about a day-to-day guidance by the Holy Spirit —being “led” by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8: 14; Gal. 5: 18), and walking according to the Spirit (Rom. 8: 4; Gal. 5: 16).

Now it is possible to understand Paul here to be referring only to obedience to the moral commands of Scripture, but this interpretation seems quite unlikely, especially since the entire context is dealing with emotions and desires which we perceive in a more subjective way, and because Paul here contrasts being led by the Spirit with following the desires of the flesh or the sinful nature:

Galatians 5:16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

The contrast between “desires of the flesh” and “desires of the Spirit” implies that our lives should be responding moment by moment to the desires of the Holy Spirit, not to the desires of the flesh.

Now it may be that a large part of responding to those desires is the intellectual process of understanding what love, joy, peace (and so forth) are, and then acting in a loving or a joyful or peaceful way.

But this can hardly constitute the whole of such guidance by the Spirit because these emotions are not simply things we think about; they are things we also feel and sense at a deeper level.

In fact, the word translated “desires” (Gk. *epithymia*) is a word that refers to strong human desires, not simply to intellectual decisions. Paul implies that we are to follow these desires as they are produced by the Holy Spirit in us.

Moreover, the idea of being “led” by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5: 18) implies an active personal participation by the Holy Spirit in guiding us. This is something more than our reflecting on biblical moral standards, and includes an involvement by the Holy Spirit in relating to us as persons and leading and directing us.

There are specific examples of the Holy Spirit guiding people directly in the book of Acts.

After the decision of the Jerusalem council, the leaders wrote in their letter to the churches, “It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things” (Acts 15: 28).

This verse suggests that the council must have had a sense of the good pleasure of the Holy Spirit in these areas: they knew what “seemed good to the Holy Spirit.”

On Paul’s second missionary journey, Luke writes that they were “forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia” and then that “they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them” (Acts 16: 6– 7).

Of course, no written principle from the Old Testament Scriptures would have led them to conclude that they could not preach in Asia or Bithynia. The Holy Spirit must rather have communicated his direct guidance to them in some specific way, whether through words heard audibly or in the mind, or through strong subjective impressions of a lack of the Holy Spirit's presence and blessing as they attempted to travel to these different areas.

Later, when Paul is on his way to Jerusalem, he says, "I am going to Jerusalem, bound in the Spirit, not knowing what shall befall me there; except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me" (Acts 20: 22– 23).

Paul did not think he had another choice— so clearly did the Holy Spirit manifest his presence and desires to him, that Paul could speak of having been "bound" in the Spirit.

In other cases the Holy Spirit gave guidance to establish people in various ministries or church offices. So the Holy Spirit said to some in the church at Antioch, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" (Acts 13: 2).

And Paul could say that the Holy Spirit had established the elders of the Ephesian church in their office because he said, "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers" (Acts 20: 28).

Finally, the Holy Spirit did provide some guidance through the means of spiritual gifts such as prophecy (1 Cor. 14: 29– 33).

D. He Provides a Godlike Atmosphere When He Manifests His Presence.

Because the Holy Spirit is fully God, and shares all the attributes of God, his influence will be to bring a Godlike character or atmosphere to the situations in which he is active.

Because he is the Holy Spirit he will at times bring about a conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16: 8– 11).

Because God is love, the Holy Spirit pours God's love into our hearts (Rom. 5: 5; 15: 30; Col. 1: 8) and often the strongly manifested presence of the Holy Spirit will create an atmosphere of love.

Because God is "not a God of confusion but of peace" (1 Cor. 14: 33), the Holy Spirit brings an atmosphere of peace into situations: "The kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14: 17; cf. Gal. 5: 22).

This last verse also teaches that the Holy Spirit imparts an atmosphere of joy (see also Acts 13: 52; 1 Thess. 1: 6).

Although the list is not exhaustive, Paul summarized many of these Godlike qualities that the Holy Spirit produces when he listed the various elements of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5: 22– 23.

Other elements of the atmosphere that the Holy Spirit can impart are:

truth (John 14 :17; 15: 26 ; 16: 13; 1 John 5: 7),

wisdom (Deut. 34: 9; Isa. 11: 2),

comfort (Acts 9: 31), freedom (2 Cor. 3 :17),

righteousness (Rom. 14: 17),

hope (Rom. 15: 13; cf. Gal. 5 :5),

an awareness of sonship or adoption (Rom. 8: 15– 16; Gal. 4: 5– 6),

and even glory (2 Cor. 3: 8).

The Holy Spirit also brings unity (Eph. 4: 3),

and power (Acts 1: 18; 1 Cor. 2: 4; 2 Tim. 1: 7; cf. Acts 1: 8).

All of these elements of the Holy Spirit's activity indicate the various aspects of an atmosphere in which he makes his own presence—and thereby his own character—known to the people.

E. He Gives Us Assurance.

The Holy Spirit bears witness “with our spirits that we are children of God” (Rom. 8: 16), and gives evidence of the work of God within us: “And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given us” (1 John 3: 24).

“By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit” (1 John 4: 13).

The Holy Spirit not only witnesses to us that we are God's children, but also witnesses that God abides in us and that we are abiding in him. Once again more than our intellect is involved: the Spirit works to give us assurance at the subjective level of spiritual and emotional perception as well.

F. He Teaches and Illumines.

Another aspect of the Holy Spirit's revealing work is teaching certain things to God's people and illumining them so that they can understand things.

Jesus promised this teaching function especially to his disciples when he said that the Holy Spirit “will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (John 14: 26), and said, “he will guide you into all the truth” (John 16: 13).

Moreover, he promised that when his disciples were put on trial because of persecution, the Holy Spirit would teach them at that time what to say.
(Luke 12: 12; cf. Matt. 10: 20; Mark 13: 11)

At other times the Holy Spirit revealed specific information to people— showing Simeon that he would not die until he saw the Messiah, for example (Luke 2: 26), or revealing to Agabus that a famine would occur (Acts 11: 28) or that Paul would be taken captive in Jerusalem (Acts 21: 11).

In other cases the Holy Spirit revealed to Paul that he would suffer in Jerusalem (Acts 20: 23; 21: 4) and expressly said to Paul things that would happen in the latter days (1 Tim. 4: 1), and revealed to him what God has prepared for those who love him (1 Cor. 2: 10).

The illuminating work of the Holy Spirit is seen in the fact that he enables us to understand: “We have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God” (1 Cor. 2: 12).

Therefore, “The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts (literally, things) of the Spirit of God” but “The spiritual man judges all things” (1 Cor. 2: 14– 15).

We should pray that the Holy Spirit would give us his illumination and thereby help us to understand rightly when we study Scripture or when we ponder situations in our lives.

Ephesians 1: 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might

4. The Holy Spirit Unifies

When the Holy Spirit was poured out on the church at Pentecost, Peter proclaimed that the prophecy of Joel 2: 28– 32 was fulfilled:

Acts 2: 16 But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: 17 “And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; 18 even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.

There is an emphasis on the Holy Spirit coming on a community of believers— not just a leader like Moses or Joshua, but sons and daughters, old men and young men, menservants and maidservants— all will receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in this time.

In the event of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit created a new community which was the church.

The community was marked by unprecedented unity, as Luke reminds us:

Acts 2:44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Paul blesses the Corinthian church with a blessing that seeks the unifying fellowship of the Holy Spirit for all of them when he says,

2 Corinthians 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

It is significant that in this trinitarian verse he especially attributes the deepening of fellowship among believers not to the Father or the Son but to the Holy Spirit, a statement consistent with the overall unifying work of the Spirit in the church.

This unifying function of the Holy Spirit is also evident when Paul tells the Philippians,

Philippians 2:1 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, 2 complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

In a similar way, when he emphasizes the new unity between Jews and Gentiles in the church, he says that “through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father” (Eph. 2: 18), and says that in the Lord they are built into the one new house of God “in the Spirit” (Eph. 2: 22).

When he wants to remind them of the unity they should have as Christians he exhorts them to be “eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4: 3).

Paul’s discussion of spiritual gifts also repeats this theme of the unifying work of the Holy Spirit .

Whereas we might think that people who have differing gifts would not readily get along well with each other, Paul’s conclusion is just the opposite: differing gifts draw us together, because we are forced to depend on each other. “The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you,’ nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you’ ” (1 Cor. 12: 21).

These differing gifts, Paul tells us, are empowered by “one and the same Spirit , who apportions to each one individually as he wills” (1 Cor. 12: 11), so that in the church, “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Cor. 12: 7). In fact , “in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body— Jews or Greeks, slaves or free —and all were made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12: 13, author’s translation).

The idea that the Holy Spirit unifies the church is also evident in the fact that “strife . . . disputes, dissensions, factions” (Gal. 5: 20) are desires of the flesh that are opposed to being “led by the Spirit” (Gal. 5: 18; cf. v. 25).

The Holy Spirit is the one who produces love in our hearts (Rom. 5: 5; Gal. 5: 22; Col. 1: 8), and this love “binds everything together in perfect harmony” (Col. 3: 14).

Therefore when the Holy Spirit is working strongly in a church to manifest God’s presence, one evidence will be a beautiful harmony in the church community and overflowing love for one another.

5. The Holy Spirit Gives Stronger or Weaker Evidence of the Presence and Blessing of God According to Our Response to Him

Many examples in both the Old and New Testament indicate that the Holy Spirit will bestow or withdraw blessing according to whether or not he is pleased by the situation he sees.

It is noteworthy that Jesus was completely without sin and the Holy Spirit “remained on him” (John 1: 32) and was given to him without measure (John 3: 34).

In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit came mightily upon Samson several times (Judg. 13 :25; 14: 6, 19; 15: 14), but ultimately left him when he persisted in sin (Judg. 16: 20).

Similarly, when Saul persisted in disobedience the Holy Spirit departed from him. (1 Sam. 16: 14)

And when the people of Israel rebelled and grieved the Holy Spirit he turned against them. (Isa. 63: 10)

Also in the New Testament the Holy Spirit can be grieved and cease to bring blessing in a situation.

Stephen rebuked the Jewish leaders, saying, “You always resist the Holy Spirit” (Acts 7: 51). Paul warns the Ephesian Christians, “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” (Eph. 4: 30), and exhorts the Thessalonian church, “Do not quench the Spirit” (1 Thess . 5: 19; cf. the metaphor of delaying to open the door and thereby disappointing one’s lover in Song of Sol.5: 3, 6).

In a similar vein, Paul gives a serious warning to Christians not to defile their bodies by joining them to a prostitute because the Holy Spirit lives within their bodies:

1 Corinthians 6: 19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Even more serious than grieving or quenching the Holy Spirit is a deeper, more hardened disobedience to him that brings strong judgment. When Peter rebuked Ananias, “Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land?” (Acts 5: 3), he fell down dead.

Similarly, when Peter said to Ananias’s wife Sapphira, “How is it that you have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?” (Acts 5: 9), she immediately fell down dead as well. The book of Hebrews warns those who are in danger of falling away that severe punishment is deserved by the man “who has spurned the Son of God, and profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace” (Heb. 10: 29).

For such a person there only remains “a fearful prospect of judgment ” (Heb. 10: 27).

Finally, there remains one more level of offense against the Holy Spirit. This kind of offense is even more serious than grieving him or acting with the hardened disobedience to him that brings discipline or judgment.

It is possible so to offend the Holy Spirit that his convicting work will not be brought to bear again in a person’s life. Every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. And whoever says a word against the Son of man will be forgiven; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come. (Matt. 12: 31– 32; cf. Mark 3: 29; Luke 12: 10)

These statements are made in a context in which the Pharisees willfully and maliciously attribute to Satan the powerful work of the Holy Spirit that was evident in the ministry of Jesus.

Since the Holy Spirit so clearly manifested the presence of God, those who willfully and maliciously spoke against him and attributed his activity instead to the power of Satan were guilty, Jesus said, “of an eternal sin” (Mark 3: 29).

All of these passages indicate that we must be very careful not to grieve or offend the Holy Spirit. He will not force himself on us against our wills (see 1 Cor. 14: 32), but if we resist and quench and oppose him, then his empowering will depart and he will remove much of the blessing of God from our lives.

On the other hand, in the life of Christians whose conduct is pleasing to God, the Holy Spirit will be present to bring great blessing . The Holy Spirit was “poured out” in fullness at Pentecost (see Acts 2: 17– 18) and he now dwells within all true believers, making them temples of the living God (1 Cor. 3: 16; 6: 19– 20).

We can know close fellowship and partnership with the Holy Spirit in our lives.
(2 Cor. 3: 14; Phil. 2: 1)

He entrusts gifts (1 Cor. 12: 11) and truth (2 Tim. 1: 14) and ministries (Acts 20: 28) to us.

In fact, so full and abundant will be his presence that Jesus could promise that he will flow out of our inmost being like “rivers of living water” (John 7: 38– 39).

Peter promises that his presence especially rests on those who suffer for the sake of Christ: “If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you” (1 Peter 4: 14).

Therefore it is important that all our ministry be done in the Holy Spirit, that is, that we consciously dwell in the Godlike atmosphere created by the Holy Spirit— the atmosphere of power, love, joy, truth, holiness, righteousness, and peace.

But greater than these characteristics of the atmosphere created by the Holy Spirit is the sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit himself— to be in the Holy Spirit is really to be in an atmosphere of God’s manifested presence.

This is why people in the New Testament can walk in the comfort of the Holy Spirit (Acts 9: 31), and why it is possible just to be “in the Spirit” as John was on the Lord’s day. (Rev. 1: 10; cf. 4: 2)

It is surprising how many particular activities are said in the New Testament to be done “in” the Holy Spirit:

it is possible to rejoice in the Holy Spirit (Luke 10: 21),
to resolve or decide something in the Holy Spirit (Acts 19 :21),
to have one’s conscience bear witness in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 9: 1),
to have access to God in the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2: 18),
to pray in the Holy Spirit (Eph. 6: 18; Jude 20),
and to love in the Holy Spirit (Col. 1: 8).

In the light of these texts, we might ask ourselves, for how many of these activities during each day are we consciously aware of the Holy Spirit’s presence and blessing?

It is also possible to be filled with the Holy Spirit

(Eph. 5 :18; cf. Luke 1: 15, 41, 67; 4: 1; Acts 2: 4; 4: 8; 6: 3, 5; 7: 55; 9: 17; 11: 24; 13: 9).

To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be filled with the immediate presence of God himself, and it therefore will result in feeling what God feels, desiring what God desires, doing what God wants, speaking by God’s power, praying and ministering in God’s strength, and knowing with the knowledge which God himself gives.

In times when the church experiences revival the Holy Spirit produces these results in people’s lives in especially powerful ways.

Therefore in our Christian lives it is important that we depend on the Holy Spirit's power, recognizing that any significant work is done "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts" (Zech. 4: 6).

Paul is emphatic in telling the Galatians that the Holy Spirit was received by faith in the beginning of their Christian life (Gal. 3: 2) and would continue to work according to their faith in their lives subsequent to conversion:

Galatians 3: 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? ... 5 Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith—

All our ministry , whatever form it may take, is to be done in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Things to Mull

1. Do you think that you have a consciousness of relating to the Holy Spirit as a person who is distinct from God the Father and God the Son?
2. What might help you be more aware of this distinction among the members of the Trinity as they relate to you?
3. Do you perceive any difference in the way the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit relate to you in your Christian life?
4. If so, can you explain what that difference is or how you are aware of it?
5. Have you ever been especially aware of the Holy Spirit's empowering in a specific situation of ministry? Explain.
6. How did you perceive the presence of the Holy Spirit at that time, or what made you aware of his presence?
7. In your own experience, in what ways does the guidance of the Holy Spirit come to you? How do you know when this is happening?
8. Do you have a sense from time to time of the pleasure or displeasure of the Holy Spirit at some course of action that you are taking?

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