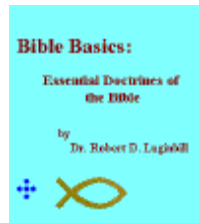


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**Bible Basics:**  
Essential Doctrines of the Bible

**Part 5: Pneumatology: the Study of the Holy Spirit**

by Dr. Robert D. Luginbill



The Spirit - the One who empowers all things in our lives for Christ.

Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.  
Zechariah 4:6 KJV

When He [the Holy Spirit] comes, He will call the world to account  
regarding sin, and righteousness, and judgment:  
- regarding sin, because they don't believe in Me.  
- regarding righteousness, because I am going to my Father  
and you're not going to be seeing Me any longer.  
- regarding judgment, because the ruler of this world has now been judged.  
John 16:8-10

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**Introduction:** Developing a systematic treatment of the Holy Spirit in scripture is exceptionally difficult to do in a meaningful way. That is because on the one

hand the Spirit is the invisible Person of the Trinity who deliberately remains unseen, and yet on the other hand there is no area of the Christian life or world history where His influence is not powerfully felt and absolutely crucial: the Father is the Originator of the Plan and the Son is the Message, the Foundation, and the Agent of the Plan – but the Spirit is the One who empowers its implementation. So while we are able to say less than we should like to do on account of the Spirit's characteristic working behind the scenes, we should have to treat every aspect of biblical doctrine and the entire Plan of God to do complete justice to the Spirit's variegated ministries. Nevertheless, we can see in all of the Spirit's ministering one fundamental characteristic that runs throughout: the preservation of freedom and its empowerment through the essential means of freedom, God's truth:

Then [as My disciples] (v.31) you will know the truth – and the **truth** will **free** you.

John 8:32

(16) I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter to be with you forever – (17) **the Spirit of truth** whom the world cannot receive, for it neither sees Him, nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He abides with you, and will be in you.

John 14:16-17

But the Encourager, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My Name, that One will **teach** you all [**the truth**] and will remind you of all [**the truth**] which I spoke to you.

John 14:26

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where **the Spirit** of the Lord is, there is **freedom**.

2nd Corinthians 3:17 NIV (cf. v.18)

And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.

1st John.5:6b

There are two main areas in which the Spirit provides the freedom necessary for human beings to become believers in the first place and then to serve our Lord effectively thereafter: 1) the provision of the overall environment of freedom in which we live our lives and 2) the provision on a personal level to all who desire it of the freedom, ability and empowerment to access God's truth and to act upon it in a godly way that glorifies the One who bought us with His blood, our dear Savior Jesus Christ. These two areas of the Spirit's provision and empowerment of our Christian freedom will be treated in parts II and III below. First, however, it is necessary to consider what scripture has to say about the Person of the Holy Spirit Himself, the One who provides us with these most marvelous benefits, blessings without which we could not be saved nor serve our Lord Jesus as He would have us to do.

## I. The Person of the Holy Spirit

### A. The Holy Spirit is a Person

The name "Spirit" is meant to connote a powerful presence which, while invisible, is nevertheless very real. It is not meant to connote a lack of life, or vitality, or personality. The Holy Spirit is a co-equal, co-eternal, con-substantial member of the Trinity. He is God in the same way that the Father and the Son are God.<sup>1</sup> As God, the Spirit has the same Personhood as the Father and the Son, as may be clearly seen from the way in which He and His relationship with the Father and the Son is described in scripture:

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of (the [Father]) God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.  
2nd Corinthians 13:14

The following list, while it is not meant to be comprehensive, is illustrative of the fact that the Holy Spirit's personality and personhood are evident in virtually every place where His interaction with believers or action on our behalf is mentioned in the Bible:

As the One who restrains the Lawless one:

For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work – it is only the Restrainer [who keeps things in check, and will] until He moves out of the way.  
2nd Thessalonians 2:7

As the One who personally superintends the growth of Christ's Church:

While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you. So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them."  
Acts 10:19-20 NIV

As the One who personally makes possible, directs and empowers the spiritual growth of all believers:

(17) Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Lord's Spirit is, there is freedom.  
(18) And everyone of us, if we reflect the Lord's glory with no "veil" obscuring our faces (i.e., with unsullied Christian witness), is being transformed into the same image [of God] (i.e., become more Christ-like as we use our will to respond to Him) so as to reflect an ever greater degree of [God's] glory [as we do so] (lit., "from glory to glory") – exactly what is to be expected with ***the Lord's Spirit as the agent*** [of our transformation].  
2nd Corinthians 3:17-18

As the One who personally intercedes for us in prayer:

And the Spirit helps us in our weakness in a similar way. For we do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us also with anguished supplications which words cannot express.

Romans 8:26

As the One who is sent to be our Helper and Teacher:

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you."

John 14:26 NKJV

As One who addresses John and the seven churches (something only a person can do):

(4b) "**Grace to you and peace** from the One who is and was and is coming (i.e., the Father), and **from the seven spirits** (i.e., the Holy Spirit) which are before His throne, (5) and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth."

Revelation 1:4b-5a

## B. The Holy Spirit is God

All who accept the essential truth of the doctrine of the Trinity accept the truth that the Spirit is God, and scripture confirms throughout the truth of the Spirit's divinity (Gen.1:2; Ps.139:7; Acts 5:3-4; 1Cor.12:11; and compare Heb.3:7-11 with Ps.95:7-11 where the Lord is speaking):

Now **the Lord** is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 2nd Corinthians 3:17 NIV

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from **the Lord**, who is the Spirit.

2nd Corinthians 3:18 NIV

## C. The Holy Spirit's Chosen Role in the Plan of God

From the first chapter of the Old Testament (Gen.1:2), to the closing chapter of the New Testament (Rev.22:17), the word "spirit" is used to refer to God the Holy Spirit. The Hebrew and Greek words for "spirit" (*ruach* and *pneuma* respectively) have the core meaning of "wind" or "breeze", and there are important points to be garnered from that analogy. The wind is a potent, invisible force. Though we perceive it and experience its effects, we can neither see where it has come from or where it is going to (Jn.3:8). The wind can have everything from a gentle, warming influence to a powerful, chilling effect. "Wind" is thus an aptly descriptive analogy for the Holy Spirit's role in the plan of God: His invisible yet powerful support of good (Zech.4:6; 1Cor.12:3) and restraint of evil (Gen.6:3; 1Cor.12:3; 2Thes.2:5-8) in the furtherance of the plan of God must not be underestimated. The Holy Spirit is often referred to as the 3rd person of the

Trinity (i.e., the unseen "he" person), because unlike the Father, He does not speak directly to us, and unlike the Son, He has not been made manifest to us; instead, like the wind, He is unseen by us, but, like the wind, that does not mean that we do not experience His power in a very personal and dynamic way (Jn.14:16-17; Gal.5:22-26). Indeed we do. And it is precisely that invisible empowerment of all godly action – along with the empowerment of the Plan of God and damping or restraining of the power of evil – which is the essential feature of the Holy Spirit's chosen role in carrying out that plan.

#### 1. As described in scripture:

From the very first book of the Bible, the Spirit is clearly seen to be the one who renders evil powerless that human beings may live in freedom and hear the truth, who strives to impart that truth, and who empowers the godly who do respond to God's truth:

But the earth came to be ruined and despoiled – darkness lay upon the face of the abyss while God's Spirit brooded over the surface of its waters (i.e., so as to prevent further satanic action).<sup>2</sup>

Genesis 1:2

And God said, "My Spirit will not strive with Man forever in their sinful manner of life – for this [is the way of] flesh. Therefore his days shall be 120 years."<sup>3</sup>

Genesis 6:3

And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?"

Genesis 41:38 NKJV

To use a military analogy in explaining the roles of the Trinity in carrying out the Plan of God, if we think of the Father as the Supreme Commander of the general staff, and the Lord Jesus Christ as the Battlefield Commander, then the Spirit's role will be that of the Head Quartermaster and Logistician. His role is to provide freedom and to empower that freedom in response to God. All human beings are given genuine free will at birth, for all of us are created in the image of God.<sup>4</sup> We are all placed here on this earth to choose for or against having an eternal relationship with God through Jesus Christ.<sup>5</sup> For our free will to be able to actually operate in genuine choice, however, an environment or "envelope" of freedom in which we can fairly choose must be provided (including both material and spiritual essentials), and it is the Holy Spirit who provides these basics necessary to the carrying out of the Plan of God on the individual level.

It is altogether understandable that it should be the Holy Spirit who enables our human spirits to express their essential free will in choosing our eternal future, inasmuch as human free will, correctly understood, is the faculty which allows us to be responsive to God's will (or to refuse to respond). We cannot respond to the will of God without knowing it, and it is the Holy Spirit who makes all truth knowable and accessible for those who wish to know it. We cannot respond to the

will of God without the essentials of life including a measure of freedom to do so, and it is the Holy Spirit who provides that envelope of freedom of action and basic livability necessary to be able to do so. In short, the Holy Spirit stands at the nexus between God's truth and our free will, making it possible for us to understand that truth and respond if we so choose, while vouchsafing us the freedom and the means, "breath and life and all things" so to be able to do so (Acts 17:25).

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, ***there is freedom.***

2nd Corinthians 3:17 NIV

Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

1st Corinthians 12:3 NIV

The Holy Spirit's ministries thus encompass every aspect of the Plan of God as it pertains to human choice and free will, empowering and enabling and, indeed, making possible every godly decision and action to respond to the truth, while restraining and inhibiting the attempts of the ungodly and of the evil one to prevent the salvation of those who are willing to turn from the world to Jesus Christ, the Word of God, and the spiritual growth, progress and production of all who do.

## 2. As illustrated by symbols:

The title "Holy Spirit" is itself a very descriptive symbol. He is God, hence "holy" as opposed to all other spirits, and the deity inherent in his title makes it clear that the nature of His "spirit" is qualitatively different from all other spirits as well (since these are all confined to within this creation, but He is not). As mentioned above, the words *ruach* (רוח) in Hebrew and *pneuma* (πνεῦμα) in Greek mean "wind", and as such tells us much about the Spirit's role in the plan of God. The wind can be phenomenally powerful, and yet it is invisible; it is real, but it can only be detected by its actions (Jn.3:8). Wind can have everything from a gentle, warming influence to a powerful, chilling effect, and these characteristics are deliberately analogous respectively to the Spirit's invisible yet powerful support of good on the one hand (e.g., Zech.4:6; 1Cor.12:3), and of His restraint of evil on the other (e.g., Gen.6:3; 1Cor.12:3; 2Thes.2:5-8).

"The ***wind*** (*pneuma*) blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the ***Spirit*** (*pneuma*)."

John 3:8 NIV

Other important biblical representations of the Spirit which are likewise evocative of His role in the Plan of God include:



a. Oil: illustrating the warming, empowering, illuminating and healing properties of the Spirit's anointing ministry (Ex.29:7; Lev.21:10; Num.35:25; 1Sam.10:1; 16:13; 1Ki.1:39; Ps.23:5; 45:7; Ezek.28:14; Dan.9:24-26; Zech.4:11-14; Matt.25:1-10; Mk.6:13; Lk.4:18; Acts 4:26-27; 10:38; Jas.5:14):

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me [the Messiah], for the Lord has anointed Me.

Isaiah 61:1a

(21) Now the One who has given us security in regard to Christ together with you and who has anointed us (i.e., with the Spirit) is God – (22) [Yes, He] has also sealed us and given us His pledge of the Spirit in our hearts.

2nd Corinthians 1:21-22

But you have an anointing from the Holy One (i.e., the universal indwelling of the Spirit to believers), and you all know [this] (i.e., the anointing is so powerful that every believer is aware of His presence).

1st John 2:20

b. Fire: illustrating the power, potency, and cleansing properties of the Spirit's ministries (Ex.13:21; 19:18; Deut.4:24; 4:36; Ps.104:4; Is.10:17; Jer.5:14; Ezek.1:13; Dan.7:9; Zech.2:5; Lk.3:16; Heb.12:29; Rev 4:5; cf. Ps.69:9; Jn.2:17; Acts 18:25; Rom.12:11; 2Tim.1:6-7; Tit.2:14; Rev.3:15-16):

Behold, the Lord shall wash away the filth of the daughters of Zion and shall cleanse away the blood [guilt] from Jerusalem's midst with [His] ***Spirit of judgment*** (i.e., of the filth representing sin) and [His] ***Spirit of burning*** (i.e., to purge and cleanse away the blood guilt).

Isaiah 4:4

Now I am baptizing you with water for the purpose of [your] repentance. But the One coming after me is more powerful than me and I am not worthy to carry His sandals. It is He who is the One who will baptize you with ***the Holy Spirit and with fire***.

Matthew 3:11

Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues ***of fire*** that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with ***the Holy Spirit*** and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Acts 2:2-4 NIV

In regard to your enthusiasm, do not be hesitant, but be boiling with the Spirit.

Romans 12:11

Do not put out the Spirit's fire.

1st Thessalonians 5:19

### c. The Seven Spirits:

(4) John, to the seven churches which are in Asia [Minor]: Grace to you and peace from the One who is and was and is coming (i.e., the Father), and from the seven spirits (i.e., the Holy Spirit) which are before His throne, (5) and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth. To the One who loves us and has released us from our sins by His blood – (6) and He has made us a kingdom, priests of His God and Father – to Him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

Revelation 1:4-6

The seven spirits which reside before the very throne of the Father are a reference to God the Holy Spirit as is evident from John's invoking of the entire Trinity here, and also from later instances in the book of Revelation and elsewhere in scripture (Prov.9:1; Is.11:2; Zech.3:9; 4:2; 4:10 with 4:6; Rev.3:1; 4:5; 5:6). The Holy Spirit is, of course, indivisible, and the number seven here connotes the idea of perfection and completion, that is, the continued perfect ministry of the Spirit throughout all seven periods of the Church age promoting spiritual growth and restraining the evil one. That the Holy Spirit is not overtly so named here is in keeping with His role in the Father's plan, empowering that plan in a powerful but deliberately unseen way. This seven-fold perfect ministry of the Spirit is also prophesied in relation to our Lord Jesus' earthly ministry:

And the Spirit of the Lord (#1) will rest upon Him (i.e., the Messiah), the Spirit of wisdom (#2) and understanding (#3), the Spirit of counsel (#4) and might (#5), the Spirit of knowledge (#6) and the fear of the Lord (#7).

Isaiah 11:2

### d. Seven Lamps:

And there [stood] burning before the throne seven lamps of fire, which are the seven spirits of God.

Revelation 4:5b

In this context as well, we see all three members of the Trinity present in the heavenly temple (e.g., the Father: Rev.4:2-3; and the Son: Rev.5:6), so that it is clear that these "seven lamps of fire" must represent the Holy Spirit. The manifestation of the Spirit in the symbol of "lamps" thus not only expresses His role in God's plan of enlightenment, of empowerment, and of witness to the world (cf. Jn.16:5-15), but also maintains His posture of being ever "felt but not seen" as the invisible yet powerful "energizer" of that plan. The fact that the Spirit is represented by seven lamps emphasizes the perfect and complete nature of the empowerment, enlightenment, and witness He provides (Is.11:1-3; Zech.3:8-9; 4:2; 4:6; 4:10; Rev.3:1; 5:6; cf. Is.42:1; Matt.3:16-17; Jn.3:34; 16:12-15).

In the ancient world, "lamps" were generally small, oblong, ceramic trays, with a narrow throat that held a wick which drew and burned olive oil from the basin of the lamp. As vessels of the Holy Spirit (1Cor.6:19-20; cf. Rom.6:13-19; 12:2;

1Pet.2:5), we believers, whether individually or, as in the case of the seven churches, collectively, are "lampstands" (Rev.1:12-13; 1:20; 2:1; 2:5; 11:4), that is, instruments of God who are used by Him to facilitate the shining forth of His Word and His witness in this dark world (Matt.5:15-16; Jn.14:26-27; Eph.5:8; Phil.2:15; 1Thes.5:5). The source of light, however, the "lamp" which provides the light we hold aloft, display and reflect, is God the Holy Spirit (2Cor.3:17-18; cf. Gal.5:16-25).

e. Seven Eyes: The "seven eyes" of Zechariah (Zech.3:9; 4:10) are said in Revelation 5:6 to be identical with "the seven spirits of God sent out into the entire earth", and represent in that context, the completeness of the Son's empowerment by the Holy Spirit (cf. Is.11:1-3; 42:1-4; Jn.3:34). The seven-fold disbursement of the Spirit "throughout the world" is symbolic of the fact that the Spirit is watching everything, and acting at all times and in all places to maintain the basic freedom of action necessary for those who wish to do so to come to Christ in faith and to respond to Him in this life.

f. Seven Seals: The seven seals of Revelation chapter five also refer to the Holy Spirit.

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God with whom you were **sealed** for a [future] day of redemption (i.e., the day of resurrection).  
Ephesians 4:30

In particular, the seven seals of Revelation chapter five refer to the restraining ministry of the Holy Spirit who must "stand down" in His restraint the evil one for antichrist to come on the scene and for the Tribulation to begin. The book (actually, "scroll") of Revelation chapter five is the Revelation of Jesus Christ, and this entails the preceding prophetic period, the Tribulation, which can only occur after the Restraint, the Holy Spirit, "moves out of the way" to allow these events to take place.<sup>6</sup>

g. The Dove: The Spirit's lighting upon our Lord Jesus Christ after His water-baptism by John is compared to that of a dove in all four of the gospel accounts, e.g.:

And the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form **like a dove**. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."  
Luke 3:22 NIV

It should be noted here as well as in all of the gospel accounts scripture is very careful not say that the Spirit is or even is like "a dove", but merely that His descent upon our Lord was reminiscent of the descent of a dove. It seems clear that the peacefulness, mildness and un presupposing nature of the dove are meant here. This is in keeping with the Spirit's gentle yet powerful manifestation of Himself behind the scenes in His empowering of the Plan of God.

h. The Sword of the Spirit: The Spirit's role in inspiring and empowering the Word of God is powerfully and dynamically communicated by this military metaphor where the individual Christian is seen as Christ's soldier and the scriptures his primary weapon:

And [in this spiritual warfare] put on the helmet of salvation and gird on the sword of the Spirit – which is the Word of truth.  
Ephesians 6:17 (cf. Heb.4:12)

i. The Pledge: Three times in his epistles, Paul compares the Holy Spirit to a "pledge" (Greek: *arrabon*, ἀρραβών, from the Hebrew עֶרְבֹן), namely, the "down payment" which every believer receives at salvation, the "bond" which is a surety of the resurrection and eternal life that all who belong to Christ will receive at His return. It is the possession of the Spirit which guarantees that blessed hope.

(21) Now the One who has given us security in regard to Christ together with you and who has anointed us (i.e., with the Spirit) is God – (22) [Yes, He] has also sealed us and given us His **pledge** of the Spirit in our hearts.  
2nd Corinthians 1:21-22

And it is God [the Father] who has fashioned us for this very purpose [of resurrection and eternal life], and it is He who has given us the **pledge** of the Spirit [to guarantee that eternal future].  
2nd Corinthians 5:5

(13) In [Christ] you also when you heard the Word of truth, the good news of your salvation, in whom [I say], when you believed, you were sealed by the Spirit of promise, the Holy [Spirit], (14) who is a **pledge** of our inheritance for redeeming its preservation (i.e., safeguarding our resurrection and reward in every way), for the purpose of the praise of His glory (in eternity).  
Ephesians 1:13-14

### 3. As Illustrated by His names:

a. The Holy Spirit: Other than simply "the Spirit", this is the most common name for Him found in scripture. Of a certainty the Spirit is holy, inasmuch as holiness is an essential characteristic of the essence of God.<sup>7</sup> As applied to the Spirit, therefore, the adjective "holy" (Greek *hagios*, ἅγιος; Hebrew *qodesh*, קֹדֶשׁ), is meant to focus on His work in bringing about holiness, that is, with bringing about of sanctification, the state of "holiness", or being separated from all that is profane.<sup>8</sup> The Spirit is the One who empowers the Plan of God, and inasmuch as the ultimate purpose of that plan is the separation of good from evil we can see that this name perfectly reflects the Spirit's chosen role in that plan. He is the One who restrains evil on behalf of the good (giving the godly breathing space to choose for and serve God); and He is the One who empowers good in the struggle with evil (giving the godly the means to separate themselves from evil and cleave instead unto the truth by means of the Word of God).<sup>9</sup>

b. The Spirit of Truth: Jesus is the truth, the embodiment of the knowledge and wisdom of God, for He is the very Plan of God (e.g., Col.1:16-20; Tit.1:1-3). Therefore this title is most appropriate inasmuch as it is the Spirit who empowered Jesus Christ in His humanity and who makes all the truth about Him who is the truth available and perceptible to the world.

(16) I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter to be with you forever – (17) **the Spirit of truth** whom the world cannot receive, for it neither sees Him, nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He abides with you, and will be in you.

John 14:16-17 (cf. Jn.15:26; 16:13; 1Jn.4:6)

The Spirit is the One who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.  
1st John 5:6b

c. The Spirit of Wisdom: Wisdom is truth understood and applied, and just as it takes the Holy Spirit to understand God's truth so that it may be believed, so also it takes the Holy Spirit for the believer to consider that truth and to apply it in a godly way: that is true wisdom (Is.11:2; cf. Ex.28:3; Deut.34:9; Prov.8:1-36; cf. Eph.1:17).

d. The Spirit of Christ: The Holy Spirit is also called "the Spirit of Christ" (as well as "the Spirit of Jesus": Acts 16:7; and "the Spirit of Jesus Christ": Phil.1:19) in order to emphasize that He is the One whom Christ sent to empower and guide His Church. It is His presence which identifies believers as such in this age (Rom.8:9), and it was also through His ministrations that Old Testament prophets prophesied about the coming Messiah (1Pet.1:11). Similar to this title is "the Spirit of the Lord" or "the Lord's Spirit", a standard Old Testament phrasing which, inasmuch as it also found in the New Testament (Lk.4:18; Acts 5:9; 8:39; 2Cor.3:17-18), should be taken to mean "the Spirit of the Lord **Jesus**".

e. The Spirit of Life: This title is employed for the Spirit once in the New Testament (Rom.8:2; cf. Gen.7:22; Rev.11:11), in order to contrast directly the life-giving power of the Spirit in regenerating those who believe in Christ from the code of condemnation, that is, the Mosaic Law:

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed you from the Law of sin and death.

Romans 8:2

f. The Encourager: This title is found eight times in John's writings, and in particular in his gospel in the context of our Lord's promise to send the Spirit after His ascension (Jn.14:16; 14:26; 15:26; 16:7; 1Jn.2:1). Sometimes rendered "Comforter" (KJV, ASV), "Advocate" (NIV, NLT), "Counselor" (RSV, HNV), or "Helper" (NKJV, ESV, NASB), the Greek noun, *parakletos* (παράκλητος), is derived from the cognate verb meaning "to encourage, console, and comfort" (*parakaleo*, παρακαλέω), so we may be sure that when we see divine

consolation, comfort and encouragement in scripture, that it is the Spirit who is carrying out this ministry for those who belong to Christ:

(3) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God of compassion and all encouragement (*parakalesis*, παράκλησις), (4) the One who encourages (*parakaleo*, παρακαλέω) us in all our tribulation so that we in turn may be able to encourage (*parakaleo*, παρακαλέω) those in all types of tribulation by means of the very encouragement (*parakalesis*, παράκλησις) which we ourselves received (*parakaleo*, παρακαλέω) from God. (5) Because as our sufferings for Christ multiplied in service to you, so through Christ did the encouragement (*parakalesis*, παράκλησις) we received multiply to the same degree. (6) So if we are experiencing tribulation, it is to provide you with encouragement (*parakalesis*, παράκλησις) and salvation. And if we are being encouraged (*parakaleo*, παρακαλέω), it is for the sake of the encouragement (*parakalesis*, παράκλησις) you have received, which is now at work in your successful endurance of the same sufferings which we also experienced. (7) And so our hope for you is a solid one, since we know that as you have become partakers of suffering, in the same way will you also become partakers of encouragement (*parakalesis*, παράκλησις).

2nd Corinthians 1:3-7

## **II. The Ministries of the Holy Spirit**

The world sees things almost exclusively in material terms. But as Christians we understand that in fact it is the spiritual which is more important – and actually more real – than what eye can see, what ear can hear, and what hand can touch. The spiritual realities which lie behind the physical facade of this present, temporary world are only made evident through God's provision of these truths to us. Without His empowerment, it would be impossible for us to know anything at all beyond the tangible and the empirical. It is only because God has provided us with both the truth of these much more important spiritual realities and the means of perceiving that truth that we human beings can even have the first clue about what is really important in this life. The truth consists of natural revelation (woven into the tapestry of creation) and special revelation (the Word of God), and the only means for perceiving this truth is God's provision of the Holy Spirit.

(9) But as it is written: "What the eye has not seen and the ear has not heard, and [what] has not entered the heart of man, [these are the very] things which God has prepared for those who love Him". (10) And God has revealed [these very things] to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches out everything, even the deep things of God. (11) For who knows the things of a man except the spirit of man which is in him? In the same way too no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.

1st Corinthians 2:9-11

Likewise, no one can actually do anything good in true response to God's truth without the empowerment of the Spirit; nor can anyone acting in that power do anything contrary to God's will.

Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

1st Corinthians 12:3 NIV

There are, therefore, three areas we need to consider in studying the ministries of the Holy Spirit: 1) the Spirit's ministries to the world in general (whose purpose is to provide an environment of freedom that people may respond to God's truth); 2) His ministries to believers (whose purpose is to empower our response to the Lord and protect our freedom in doing so); and also 3) His unique ministries to the One unique Person in history, our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the One who accomplished the sacrifice of the cross, the rock upon which the plan of God is founded and without which nothing else of any importance would be possible or have any true meaning.

#### A. Ministries to the World

We have mentioned above that the essential element of every ministry of the Spirit is the provision of freedom, that is to say, **true** freedom, which is always the freedom to respond to God and to do His will. This provision of freedom has two aspects: 1) the empowerment of our response to God's will by providing the power and the truth necessary to respond, and 2) the provision of an environment of protection wherein the person in question has the essential means and opportunity in order to respond. In all such ministries and their manifold manifestations, the Spirit stays in the background, not revealing Himself to human view, but nevertheless making Himself powerfully and obviously felt (at least to any and all who are willing to respond). The reasons for His purposeful invisibility are twofold: 1) in order for Jesus Christ to be the ultimate and only issue in the choices all human beings make in response to the truth which the Spirit brings to bear, and 2) in order for the genuineness of human free will as exercised in faith (or the lack thereof) towards God's truth in Jesus Christ to remain uncompromised as the ultimate and only arbiter of those choices.

##### 1. Creation:

###### a. Initial Creation:

By the Word of Lord the heavens were made; and all their host by the Spirit (breath) of His mouth.

Psalm 33:6

The entire Trinity was involved in initial creation, and that is why Genesis 1:1 says that "God (*'elohiym*, the Hebrew plural word for God; cf. Gen.1:26: "Let **us** . . .) created the heavens and the earth in the beginning". As can be seen from the

verse above, the Father is the architect of the plan: the Word is His, and the Spirit proceeds from Him. The Word is of course our Lord Jesus Christ (Jn.1:3; 1:10; 1Cor.8:6; Col.1:15-17; Heb.1:2; 1:10), and the "breath" or Spirit (Heb. *ruach*) is the Holy Spirit. In keeping with their roles throughout history, we see here even in the initial creation of the world the direction of the Father, the implementation of that direction by the Son, and the empowerment of that implementation by the Spirit.

"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit" says the Lord of Hosts.  
Zechariah 4:6

b. Reconstruction:

(1) Before all else, God created the heavens and the earth. (2) But the earth came to be ruined and despoiled – darkness lay upon the face of the abyss while God's Spirit brooded over the surface of its waters. (3) Then God said, "Let light be!", and there was light.

Genesis 1:1-3

The pattern of God's restoration of the earth to liveable conditions and the creation of mankind upon it as a direct answer to Satan's revolt purposefully demonstrates the process of sanctification by the Spirit, that is, of separating good from evil and of empowering human faith response to the truth and the will of God through the provision of a protected environment wherein mankind is genuinely free to choose for Jesus Christ.

**Genesis Days**

<b>Physical</b>	<b>Spiritual</b>
1. <u>separated</u> : light from darkness (general)>	< <u>separated</u> : the truth from the lie
2. <u>separated</u> : waters from waters yielding air> coercion (1)	< <u>separated</u> : freedom from coercion
3. <u>separated</u> : the dry land from water> coercion (2)	< <u>separated</u> : freedom from coercion
<u>filled</u> : vegetation>	< <u>filled</u> : provision for life (1)
4. <u>filled</u> : regulating heavenly bodies> setting nation	< <u>filled</u> : Israel the standard-setting nation
<u>separated</u> : light from darkness (specific)>	< <u>separated</u> : right from wrong
5. <u>filled</u> : fish and birds>	< <u>filled</u> : provision for life (2)
6. <u>filled</u> : terrestrial animals and livestock>	< <u>filled</u> : provision for life (3)



completion: the First Adam by Eve>  
response

< completion: salvation through

7. rest: blessing on the re-created world>  
resurrection

< rest: the blessing of

For human beings, creatures far inferior in power and capabilities to the angels, to exist and to live and to enjoy a genuine opportunity in this life to respond to the truth of God (or refuse to do so), many special provisions were necessary after the destruction of the world following Satan's revolt.<sup>10</sup> The inhospitable environment of the cosmos at that time required a process of separation and provision to remove hostile conditions and to provide for and protect favorable conditions for human life. These separations and fillings, empowered by the Spirit (and accomplished by the Agency of the Son according to the plan of the Father) deliberately foreshadow the Spirit's other ministries to the world and to believers in particular. For He is the "Spirit of holiness/sanctification" (Rom.1:4), the One who separates the sacred from the profane, good from evil, right from wrong, believers from unbelievers, and the One who, having accomplished this essential series of separations, then provides an environment of protection for human beings to have the opportunity to respond to God's truth without undue coercion from or outright destruction by satanic forces. Thus it is that Spirit restrains evil and empowers good, as illustrated in the chilling and warming effects of an unseen but powerful wind.

For it was [God's] good pleasure for the fulfillment [of His plan] to reside entirely in [Christ], and so through Him to reconcile everything to Himself, having made peace through Him, through the blood of His cross, whether things on earth, or things in heaven.

Colossians 1:19-20

As His Church, we Christians are Christ's Body, "the fullness of the One who fills up all things in all ways". This "filling up" of the Church (along with its complement of millennial believers) is the divinely purposed and intended result of the Spirit's work of restraint and empowerment, of separation and filling, foreshadowed in the seven Genesis days, and implemented in all of His various ministries to the world, to believers in particular, and specifically to the humanity of Jesus Christ. Through choosing for Jesus the Church/Family of God is filled back up from the deficiency created by Satan's revolt, and that process of fulfillment is only possible because of the Spirit's separation of the good from the evil, His empowerment of the good opposed by the evil, and His special ministry to the One who conquered evil by means of the good and made all things possible, our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of the heifer sprinkled upon the unclean render a person holy in respect to bodily cleansing, how much more will the blood of Christ, who offered Himself (i.e., His body; cf. 1Pet.3:18) without defect to God ***through the eternal Spirit***, cleanse our conscience from dead

works so that we may serve the living God?  
Hebrews 9:14

c. Individual Creatures:

And the Lord God formed the man (i.e., Adam's body) from the dust of the ground, then blew into his nostrils **the life-giving breath** (i.e., his spirit), and [thus] the man became a living person.  
Genesis 2:7

Then they fell upon their faces and said, "O God, **God of the spirits of all flesh** (i.e., mankind), shall one man sin, and will you be angry with the entire congregation?  
Numbers 16:22

Then [at death] the dust (i.e., the body) will return to the earth whence it came, and **the spirit** will return to God who gave it.  
Ecclesiastes 12:7

Thus says God the Lord, who creates the skies and stretches them out, who fashions the earth and its produce, who gives **breath** to the people upon it, even a **spirit** to those who walk upon it.  
Isaiah 42:5

For I will not contend eternally, nor will I be angry forever. For [Man's] spirit would faint away before Me, even his breaths (i.e., human spirits) **which I have made**.  
Isaiah 57:16

Thus says the Lord, who stretches out the heavens and lays the foundations of the earth, who **forms the spirit of Man** within him.  
Zechariah 12:1b

(24) The God who made the world and everything in it, He is Lord of heaven and earth. He does not dwell in man-made temples, (25) nor is he waited on by human hands, as if He needed anything from us. He is the One who gives us all **life and breath** and everything else.  
Acts 17:24-25

At that time we had those who fathered our flesh to discipline us, and we respected them. Shall we not all the more submit ourselves to **the Father of our spirits** and live?  
Hebrews 12:9

As the verses above demonstrate, it is the spirit, imparted into human beings at birth, which produces and defines life from the correct, divine point of view (Gen.7:22; Ezek.37:5-6; Lk.8:54-55a; Rev.11:11; cf. Job 34:14; Matt.27:50; Acts 7:59; 1Tim.6:13a).<sup>11</sup> The Holy Spirit is the One who empowers this act of the creation of all individuals, whether angels, human beings, or animals, as

evidenced by the fact that the indestructible, immaterial part of all such creatures is "the spirit", a word which in both Hebrew and Greek is identical to "the Spirit", the distinction being made between the two only from the context in question.

"The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life."

Job 33:4 NIV

(27) All creatures look to you to give them their food at the proper time. (28) When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things. (29) When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust. (30) When you send **your Spirit**, they are **created**, and you renew the face of the ground.

Psalms 104:27-30 NIV

The Spirit's role in giving life to all creatures in the first place is paralleled and complemented by His role in spiritual rebirth (see below section II.B.2.a, "Regeneration") and resurrection (see below section II.B.3.f, "Resurrection and Eternity").<sup>12</sup>

#### d. Eternity:

Scripture is not specific about the role of the Spirit in the creation of the New Heavens and the New Earth, nor about our relationship with Him in eternity. However, given the Spirit's prominent role in creation, re-creation, and regeneration, we may safely assume that He will empower this final act of eternal creation in a manner analogous to His empowerment of the previous creative acts of God. Also, inasmuch as the indwelling of the Spirit is a sign of the kingdom (Jn.7:39; cf. Acts 2:17-18) and also prophesied for the millennial kingdom (Is.44:3; Joel 2:2-29), it would certainly be understandable if, as in eternity we dwell in the presence of the Father and the Son, we were to continue to be indwelt by the Spirit. In any case, in New Jerusalem, we shall have perfect fellowship with the entire Trinity (cf. Rev.22:3; 22:16-17), once history has run its course and all things have been perfectly restored to eternal harmony through the victory of the Lamb.<sup>13</sup>

Father, as to those You have given to Me, I want them to be with Me so that they may see the glory You have given to Me, because You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

John 17:24

#### 2. Genesis Gap Restraint of the Devil:

(1) Before all else, God created the heavens and the earth. (2) But the earth came to be ruined and despoiled – darkness lay upon the face of the abyss while God's Spirit brooded over the surface of its waters.

Genesis 1:1-2

Following God's judgment upon Satan and his pre-historic rebellion, the entire universe was blacked out and flooded with the waters of the universal deep (i.e., "the abyss"; Hebrew, *tehom*). In order both to prevent any further satanic meddling in the now destroyed world and also to separate the corrupt cosmos from the sanctity of the third heaven, the Spirit acted in His role of Restrainer – the guardian of the holiness of God – setting a guard on the entire cosmos now suffused with the waters of divine judgment.

Am I the sea or a monster of the deep that You set a guard upon me?  
Job 7:12

Genesis 1:2 thus clearly constitutes a case of world-wide Holy Spirit restraint. The description of Him "brooding" over the dark waters that have been poured out in judgment on the universe speaks of deterrence, specifically, restraint of any further satanic activity, of any further interference on earth, of any angelic attempt to reverse the effects of judgment: God would not allow this, and the presence of the Spirit in restraint-mode serves to make this abundantly clear. Before the seven days of restoration, earth has been "sealed up" with the strongest "lock" of all, making any attempt by Satan to resume his activities impossible. This divine restraint was necessary to arrest any further satanic action in order for the next phase of the plan of God to be initiated, namely, the creation of mankind as a replacement for the devil and his rebellious angels (see previous note).

### 3. Pre-Flood Striving of the Spirit:

And God said, "My Spirit will not strive with Man forever in their sinful manner of life – for this [is the way of] flesh. Therefore his days shall be 120 years."  
Genesis 6:3

The pre-flood satanic attack on the human race in the days before the great deluge brought true humanity to the brink of elimination.<sup>14</sup> Angelic cohabitation with "the daughters of men" had begun to produce a not-quite-human population that came close to being universal (Gen.6:1-2; cf. 2Pet.2:4-5; Jude 1:6-7). Known in scripture as "nephilim" (Heb., נְפִלִים, "fallen ones"), these angelically engineered offspring are described as "men of renown" (see Gen.6:4). But though powerful in their bodies, this new hybrid race was virulently hostile to God and, by implication, to God's true people (Gen.6:5 and 6:9). Only the restraint of the Holy Spirit described in the verse above enabled Adam's unpolluted seed to coexist with these monsters until the time when God eradicated them from the earth (Gen.6:5-9). Instead of being allowed to destroy the remaining genuine human beings completely, the nephilim were restrained by the Spirit, allowing Noah, the last of his generation to walk with God, not only to survive but to thrive spiritually – and to be a "preacher of righteousness" who became God's instrument for the deliverance of his family and the entire true human race (2Pet.2:5).

#### 4. Restraining Antichrist:

(3) Do not let anyone deceive you in any way. For [the 2nd Advent cannot come] unless the Apostasy [the great falling away of the faithful in the first half of the Tribulation] has already occurred, and the man of lawlessness [antichrist] has been revealed, that "son of destruction" (cf. Jn.17:12 of Judas), (4) the one who will oppose and exalt himself against every so-called god and object of worship to such a degree that he will take his seat in the temple of God and represent himself as being God. (5) Don't you remember that I was telling you these things while I was still with you? (6) Even now you know what it is (i.e., the Spirit) that restrains [antichrist] so that he will be revealed [only] in his own time. (7) For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work – it is only the Restrainer [who keeps things in check, and will] until He moves out of the way. (8) And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will destroy with the Spirit of His mouth, and will annihilate with the appearance of His coming.  
2nd Thessalonians 2:3-8

Instead of preventing the action of a large group of inherently evil beings (as in Genesis six), here we see the Holy Spirit actually preventing the appearance on the scene of history of the most evil human being of all time: the beast, or antichrist. By this ministry, the Spirit refuses to allow Satan's intense attack on the people of God to occur before its proper time. Not until every moment, every spiritual opportunity of this present age of Christ's Church has been played out will the Spirit stand aside and allow the Tribulation to begin.<sup>15</sup> Through this ministry of restraint, the Holy Spirit preserves our freedom to grow in Christ, keeping us safe from antichrist, and keeping him and his world-wide reign of terror sealed up until its due time.

#### 5. Law and Order:

While scripture does not give us the details, the considerable restraint exercised upon potential human evil both individually and collectively through the visible agencies of law and nationalism is no doubt also under the invisible supervision of the Holy Spirit. In addition to every other aspect of His role in the plan of God which we are given to know something about, this may be deduced from the exceptionally high degree of law and order present during the Millennium after "the Spirit is poured out from above" (Is.32:15; cf. Joel 2:28-29), a state of affairs which is in marked contrast with the exceptional lawlessness of the Tribulation after the Restrainer "moves out of the way" (2Thes.2:6-7). As the One whose role in the plan of God is to provide the necessary freedom and basic environmental necessities required for human beings to exercise their essential choice in this world in deciding for or against God, this certainly stands to reason:

(26) For from one man [Adam], [God] created the nations of mankind, that they might inhabit the entire face of the earth. And He predetermined both their appointed times and the boundaries of their settlement, (27) that they might seek God, if perhaps they

might even [deign to] grope after Him and so come to find Him – for He is not far from any one of us.

Acts 17:26-27

(6) So he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, **but by my Spirit**,' says the LORD Almighty. (7) What are you, mighty mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground. Then he will bring out the capstone to shouts of 'God bless it! God bless it!' " (8) Then the word of the LORD came to me: (9) "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; his hands will also complete it. Then you will know that the LORD Almighty has sent me to you. (10) Who dares despise the day of small things, since **the seven eyes** of the LORD that range throughout the earth will rejoice when they see the chosen capstone in the hand of Zerubbabel?"

Zechariah 4:6-10 NIV

And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing [there, looking] as if He had been slain, with seven horns and **seven eyes** which are the seven spirits of God (i.e., the Holy Spirit) **sent out into the entire earth.**

Revelation 5:6

## B. The Spirit's Ministries for Believers and the Church

### **Introduction:**

The entire purpose of human life is for each one of us, endowed with the image of God as we are, to make the fundamental decision for which we have been created: accepting the Gift of Gifts, eternal life in Jesus Christ – or not. In order for human beings to have a genuine opportunity to be able to make this choice of choices, much is required, and the Spirit is the One who orchestrates the provision of all these necessities. For those willing, therefore, the Spirit is the One who forms the Church, the "dwelling place of God", through all of the necessary grace provisions for salvation, and through all of the necessary grace provisions for sanctification and spiritual growth thereafter.

For it is through Him (i.e., Jesus Christ) that we both have our access to the Father **by means of one Spirit**. So then, you are no longer strangers and hangers-on, but you are fellow citizens and fellow members of the household of God, established upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Himself the cornerstone, in whom the entire structure is in the process of being joined together and is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you too are being built up into a dwelling place of God **by the Spirit**.

Ephesians 2:18-22

Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?  
1st Corinthians 3:16 NIV

What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."  
2nd Corinthians 6:16 NIV

The fundamental means for all such provisions is the Word of God, because the Word of God is the truth to which human beings must respond to be saved (accepting God's Word is the means He has laid down for demonstrating our free will response to Him), as well as the focal point of all believer responsiveness to God's will after salvation. For these reasons, the intimate connection of the Spirit with the truth, the "water of the Word" which is the essential means of all spiritual life and refreshment, is often emphasized in scripture.

(5) Jesus responded, "Truly, truly I tell you, that unless a person is born from water and Spirit, he is not able to enter into the kingdom of God. (6) That which is born from the flesh is flesh, and that which is born from the Spirit is spirit.  
John 3:5-6

Then [as My disciples] (v.31) you will know the truth – and the **truth** will **free** you.  
John 8:32

(25) Husbands, love your wives as also Christ loved His Church and gave Himself over [to death] on her behalf, (26) so that He might sanctify her, having purified her by the washing of the water [of truth] in [His] Word. (27), so that He might Himself [and] for Himself present His Church in glory, without spot or blemish, but so that she might [instead] be holy and without blame.  
Ephesians 5:25-27

And [in this spiritual warfare] put on the helmet of salvation and gird on the sword of the Spirit – which is the Word of truth.  
Ephesians 6:17

(6) This is the One who came through water, blood and Spirit – not by means of water only but by means of water and blood – and it is the Spirit who testifies [to the truth of this], because the Spirit is the truth; (7) because there are three who bear witness, (8) the Spirit and the water and the blood, and the three have the same purpose."  
1st John 5:6-8

1. Pre-Salvation:

As we have seen, the Holy Spirit provides the environment of physical habitability and sufficient freedom of action to provide all human beings with the basic opportunity of exercising their free will unto salvation in this life. This may be described as a "separation" or "restraining" ministry in that herein the Spirit separates humanity in general from complete destruction and unlivable conditions (analogous to His actions in the six days of re-construction), and from absolute tyranny to a degree that no independent action would be possible (analogous to the situation that would have obtained after the flood but for the destruction of the tower of Babel) – both of which impediments to free will the evil one would be more than happy to foster, absent restraint. In order for human beings to be saved, however, positive provisions necessary to bring this about are also necessary. In this regard, the Spirit's efforts may be described as ministries of "filling", and include all the steps necessary for human beings to access, understand and apply God's truth, the quintessential means whereby we are saved and draw closer to God.

a. Sanctification: The first necessary positive provision of the Spirit which contributes to the salvation of the elect is that of sanctification. And while sanctification is a term usually associated in the Bible with the point of salvation, the process of growth, and the ultimate sanctification of the perfection of the believer in resurrection,<sup>16</sup> we are also given to see a few instances in scripture where it is clear that sanctification, a special divine "setting apart" and protection, *also* pertains to *prospective* believers (cf. Rom.8:28-30; 11:16; Gal.1:15; 2Tim.1:9-10).<sup>17</sup>

And we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning for salvation ***by the sanctification of the Spirit*** and by faith in the truth.

2nd Thessalonians 2:13

(1) Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who, though outcasts dispersed throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, were yet selected (2) in the foreknowledge of God the Father, by means of the Holy Spirit's ***consecration*** (lit., "sanctification"), ***for the obedience*** in and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Grace and peace be multiplied unto you!

1st Peter 1:1-2

This last passage in particular clearly links the foreknowledge of God with the sanctification of the Spirit. Although looking forward to the time of the believer's actual phase-one sanctification at salvation, the intent of both apostles is to connect that destined sanctification to God's decree and also to indicate that while not positionally "holy" until the point of faith in Christ, we believers do indeed find ourselves under the aegis of the Holy Spirit and His protection until the moment of our salvation (and sanctification).



b. Natural Revelation: As the "Spirit of truth", the Holy Spirit is intimately involved in communicating to all mankind the truth about God written in large if inaudible letters upon the entire creation (Jn.14:17; 1Jn.5:6).

(1) The heavens recount the glory of God, and the firmament tells of the work of His hands. (2) One day after another pours forth [His] words, and one night after another declares [His] knowledge. (3) There is no tongue or culture that cannot understand their voice (i.e., of the heavens/firmament). (4) Their design has gone out into (i.e., "is visible throughout") the entire earth, and their words to the end of the world. He has set a tent for the sun within them (i.e., hidden it in the heavens'/firmament's night sky), (5) and from this it goes forth like a [resplendent] bridegroom from his [wedding] canopy. [The sun] exults to run its course like an athlete [does]. (6) Its starting line is at one end of the heavens, and its circuit [takes it] to the ends [of the sky]. And nothing is hidden from its view. Psalm 19:1-6

This revelation of God's truth, the truth about His existence, His holy and righteous nature, and the reality of mankind's mortality and inherent sinfulness before Him are clear from everything He has made, and, moreover, are made clear to all through the agency of Spirit's witness:

(19) For that which can be known about God [from everyday experience] is obvious to them, because God has made it obvious. (20) [God's] nature, though invisible, is nevertheless plainly apparent, and has been since His foundation of the world, for it may be clearly inferred from this creation of His – [this is true of] both His eternal power and His divinity – so that they are without any excuse. Romans 1:19-20 (cf. Eccl.3:10-11)

This revealing of the most essential truths – the spiritual realities necessary to induce every prudent human being to seek a solution to the problems of sin, death and God's righteousness – are being made even more clear to the world since Christ's glorification and the gift of the Spirit to the Church:

(8) "When [the Holy Spirit] comes, He will call the world to account regarding sin, and righteousness, and judgment: (9) regarding sin, because they do not believe in Me[, the only One who can forgive their sins]; (10) regarding righteousness, because I am going to my Father and you are not going to be seeing Me any longer [as the standard of righteousness]; (11) regarding judgment, because the ruler of this world has been convicted [already, demonstrating that all who do not believe are destined for judgment]." John 16:8-11

The Spirit's ministry in this regard is protreptic, leading any and all who are willing to accept the Gift of Jesus Christ, to respond to the truth of the gospel of life eternal through His blood.

(31) Now is the judgment of this world. Now will the prince of this world be driven out. (32) And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to

Myself (i.e., "through the Spirit"; cf. Jn.6:44).  
John 12:32

c. Gospel Infrastructure: For those who are indeed willing to subordinate their will to the Will of God, for those, that is, who are not so self-centered and protective of the mastery of their own destiny that they are willing to reject eternal life to preserve it, God has also provided through the Spirit every element necessary to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. The first of these are the elements or "infrastructure" whereby the truth of the gospel is provided to those who are eager to hear it.

(1) An environment of freedom:

(26) For from one man [Adam], [God] created the nations of mankind, that they might inhabit the entire face of the earth. And He predetermined both their appointed times and the boundaries of their settlement, (27) that they might seek God, if perhaps they might even [deign to] grope after Him and so come to find Him – for He is not far from any one of us.

Acts 17:26-27

This provision in the plan of God of just the right time and place to maximize the chance to be saved in the life of each and every human being is not meant to imply absolute political freedom or absolute freedom of religion. The Roman Empire, for example, considered Christianity a dangerous cult until the mid-fourth century, and many early Christians were martyred for their faith. But there was *enough* freedom of action and freedom for disseminating the truth for all who wished to hear the gospel to do so and to be able to put their faith in Christ.

(2) The Bible:

Search the scriptures (since you assume by how you read them that you have eternal life)! These are the very scriptures that bear testimony about Me.

John 5:39

The Bible is the only source today of special revelation, that is, of God's specific truth (apart from the knowledge of Him obvious to all through contemplating His construction of the universe). Some are born again through response to the gospel message contained in the Bible itself. Moreover, the truth of gospel given through intermediaries ultimately comes only from scriptures. Therefore, in addition to its fundamental importance for the spiritual growth of believers, the Bible, inspired by the Holy Spirit (2Pet.1:20-21; cf. Eph.3:5), and produced, disseminated and protected under His auspices, is also an essential part of the infrastructure of the gospel in the formation of the Church, the Body of Christ.<sup>18</sup>

(12) "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. (13) But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. (14) He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what

he will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. (15) That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you."  
John 16:12-15 NIV

(3) Evangelists and Pastor/teachers:

But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.  
2nd Timothy 4:5 NIV

Those with the gift of evangelism primarily, but also those with gift and ministry of pastor/teacher, should ever strive to make the issue of the gospel clear to any and all to whom they minister, since the Spirit makes use of both to bring the gospel message to unbelievers, and many are born again when they hear the Word of God and its message of salvation in the gospel proclaimed through them.

(4) The Witness of Believers:

No doubt most who were saved in the past – and most who are saved to day – first become aware of the truth through the witness of the life of believers, and most first hear the truth through the verbal evangelizing of other believers.

For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything.  
1st Thessalonians 1:8 NKJV

d. Direct Provision of the Gospel: The gospel is divine truth. Human beings, however, are sinful, inhabiting bodies of corruption ever since the fall in Eden, so that between our spirits (which cannot be tainted) and the words of truth we hear, there is a filter or corruption. How, then, can we receive the truth in the first place so as to be saved? The answer to this epistemological question which has exercised philosophers for generations is the Holy Spirit. Human beings possess an invisible spiritual part (the human spirit), and it is in all cases the Holy Spirit who makes divine truth directly perceptible by that spirit, irrespective of problems resulting from the assumed mere materiality of human beings or the genuine impediment of the sin nature.

– and these same things have now been proclaimed to you through those who gave you the gospel through the Holy Spirit, sent from heaven – even angels want to look into these things.  
1st Peter 1:12b

(1) Conviction:

But if an unbeliever or an inquirer comes in while everyone is prophesying, they are convicted of sin and are brought under judgment by all, as the secrets of their hearts are laid bare. So they will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, "God is

really among you!"

1st Corinthians 14:24-25 NIV

The Greek word used above and translated "convicted-of-sin" is *elencho* (ἐλεγχω), and means, in biblical usage, proving to someone else that they are in the wrong (cf. Matt.18:15; Lk.3:19; Jn.8:46; Eph.5:11-13; 1Tim.5:20; 2Tim.4:2; Tit.1:9; 1:13; 2:15; Heb.12:5; Jas.2:9; Jude 1:15; 1:22; Rev.3:19). While in the passage above it is the prophesying of the congregation that leads the visiting unbeliever to realize that he/she is indeed a sinner in need of God's mercy – and hence of salvation through Jesus Christ – the Spirit is clearly the One whose essential ministry it is to make that "conviction" a reality in the heart of the person being evangelized in this way:

When He [the Holy Spirit] comes, He will ***call the world to account*** regarding sin, and righteousness, and judgment

– regarding sin, because they don't believe in Me.

– regarding righteousness, because I am going to my Father and you're not going to be seeing Me any longer.

– regarding judgment, because the ruler of this world has now been judged.

John 16:8-10

As this passage makes clear, the problem with being convicted of sin (in one's own heart by the Spirit) is that of staring condemnation in the face. We all know that everyone dies (Eccl.7:2; Ps.49:5-20; 1Cor.15:22). Being sinners, what defense can we possibly have then before the righteous God to whom we shall all have to give account?

(18) God's wrath is about to be revealed from heaven upon all ungodliness and unrighteousness – on men who suppress the truth [in their hearts about God] in their unrighteousness. (19) For that which can be known about God [from everyday experience] is obvious to them, because God has made it obvious. (20) His nature, though invisible, is nevertheless plainly apparent, and has been since His foundation of the world, for it may be clearly inferred from this creation of His – [this is true of] both His eternal power and His divinity – so that they are without any excuse: (21) they knew about God, but they neither honored Him as God nor thanked Him. Instead, they gave themselves over to [the] vanity [of this world] in their speculations, and their senseless hearts were filled with darkness. Romans 1:18-20

Part of the Spirit's ministry, then, as "Evangelist in Chief" (Jn.3:5-6; Rom.15:19; 1Cor.6:11; 2Cor.3:3; 3:6; 1Thes.1:5; 2Thes.2:13; 1Pet.1:11-12) is bringing home to every unbeliever – especially at critical points when the gospel is about to be presented – the fact and reality of his/her inherent sinfulness and the completely untenable nature of that status in the face of the impending reality of death, mortality and judgment: 1) because of the problem of sin absent redemption in

Christ (Jn.16:9); 2) because of the insufficiency of personal righteousness compared to the perfect standard God requires which can only be gained by grace through faith (Jn.16:10); and 3) because of the unavoidable and inevitable just judgment of God for anyone who does not have Christ as his/her Advocate – something even the present ruler of this world cannot avoid (Jn.16:11). While we cannot see this process of conviction with human eyes, we know from scripture that the Spirit is making all these things clear to the heart of unbelief. All who resist these truths do so at their eternal peril.

(19) And this is the [basis for] judgment: the Light (i.e., Jesus Christ) has come into the world, yet men loved the darkness more than the Light because their deeds were evil. (20) For everyone who commits detestable practices hates the Light and does not come to the Light, lest his deeds be exposed [for what they really are] (Greek: *elencho*, ἐλεγχω). (21) But everyone who acts in accordance with the truth comes to the Light so that it becomes obvious that his deeds have been done in God (i.e., in accordance with God's will).

John 3:19-21

## (2) Gospel Epistemology:

And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.  
1st John.5:6b

When it comes to spiritual information of any sort – that is, God's truth – the ministry of the Spirit is absolutely essential for its perception. Sinful human beings are incapable of understanding truth without God's direct help.<sup>19</sup>

Now the unspiritual man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God. For they are foolishness to him and he is not able to understand them because they are appreciated [only] through spiritual means.

1st Corinthians 2:14

Only believers are privileged to be taught the deeper truths of God's Word through the Spirit's ministry (Jn.14:26; 1Cor.2:15-16; 1Jn.2:27). But the Spirit is also active in presenting the gospel to unbelievers – otherwise they would not be able to understand its essential truths which may only be spiritually discerned. We can see this operation of the Spirit as the prime Evangelist in our Lord's castigation of the negative reception of most of His contemporaries.

(31) "And so I tell you, every kind of sin and slander can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. (32) Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come."

Matthew 12:31-32 NIV (cf. Mk.3:29; Lk.12:10)

The Spirit's communication of the gospel, that is, His making of the truth clear and understandable in the hearts of those who heard our Lord present that truth, was rejected by the legalistic crowd of our Lord's day. They blasphemously

claimed that the devil was behind His words of life and truth. What is important to note for our purposes is that our Lord calls this horrific rejection and outrageous lie an act of blasphemy **not** against Himself, but against the Spirit. That is because rejecting Christ is rejecting the truth which the Spirit has made known in one's heart: it is calling the Spirit a liar – and there is no other blasphemy with such far reaching consequences, because this act of impugning the Spirit's veracity rejects the only way of salvation (and results in a person's name being blotted out of the book of life).<sup>20</sup>

For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance . . .

1st Thessalonians 1:5a NKJV

In order for God's truth to reach our spirit undefiled, a pure and holy conduit that bypasses our sinful natures is required. While all other secular information we receive in this life is of necessity filtered through our sinful flesh, in the case of the gospel for unbelievers (and in the case of all divine truth for believers), the Holy Spirit communicates God's truth directly to the human spirit, so that all who reject the truth are absolutely without any excuse: the Spirit causes everyone who hears the gospel to understand its essential issues in order that the question of choice for or against God in Jesus Christ may be completely genuine (Lk.12:10; 1Cor.2:14; 1Thes.1:5; 2Thes.2:13; 1Jn.5:6).

[B]ut you were washed [clean], but you were made holy, but you were made righteous by [faith in] the Person (lit., Name) of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God.

1st Corinthians 6:11b

[A]nd these same things have now been proclaimed to you through those who ***gave you the gospel through the Holy Spirit***, sent from heaven – even angels want to look into these things.

1st Peter 1:12b

In the case of believers and unbelievers both, once the Spirit has made the truth perceptible to the person in question, that truth can only be retained by accepting it through faith.

"I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?"

John 3:12 NIV

## 2. The Salvation Ministries of the Spirit:

As the Spirit of Holiness, the Holy Spirit is the One who separates or sanctifies those willing to turn their backs on the world and turn to God instead. He is the One who undertakes the process of salvation for all who embrace the truth He makes perceptible in their hearts, separating us from the world in fact and bringing us instead into the filling and the fullness of Him who fills all things.<sup>21</sup>

a. Regeneration:

(5) Jesus responded, "Truly, truly I tell you, that unless a person is born from water and Spirit, he is not able to enter into the kingdom of God. (6) That which is born from the flesh is flesh, and that which is born from the Spirit is spirit.

John 3:5-6

The water in verse five above is the "water of the Word" (Is.55:1; Jn.3:5; 3:8; 4:10; 4:13-14; 6:35; 7:37-39; 1Cor.10:4; Eph.5:26; Heb.10:22; 1Jn.5:8; Rev.7:17; 21:6; 22:1; 22:17; cf. Ex 17:5-6; Num. 20:8; Ps.42:1-2; 63:1; 84:5-7; Is.41:17; 44:3; Jer.2:13), the truth, in this case, of the gospel which the Spirit makes understandable.<sup>22</sup> All who respond positively and accept the truth presented, putting their faith in Jesus Christ as the Spirit bears witness to Him (1Jn.5:6-8), are saved, being "born again".

Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born again, he is not able to see the kingdom of God".

John 3:3

Spiritual rebirth (or regeneration) is the transformation of the new believer from a state of spiritual death (the common heritage of all mankind since the fall) to the state of being alive to God, transformation from the state of being alienated from Him to becoming instead specially "His":

(12) But as many as accepted Him, to them He gave the power to become children of God, [that is,] to those who put their faith in His Person, (13) [even those] who were not [born] of blood, or fleshly desire, or human will, but [who] were born of God (i.e., "born again").

John 1:12-13

Our capability comes from God, who has made us capable ministers of a new covenant – not the one of the letter (i.e. the Law), but one of the Spirit. That is because the letter (i.e. the Law) puts us to death, but the Spirit brings us to [eternal] life.

2nd Corinthians 3:6 (cf. Rom 2:29; 8:10; Gal.4:29)

[It is God who] brought us to birth of His own Will by means of the Word of truth, so that we might be a sort of "first fruits" of His creations.

James 1:18

[For you] have been born again not from corruptible seed but through the Word of God which lives and abides forever.

1st Peter 1:23

This is "eternal life" in fact, although "what we shall be" has not yet been made manifest (1Jn.3:2), and the eternal dimensions of this new life we possess are presently hidden from the world "in Christ" (Col.3:3; 1Pet.3:3-4). Given that the Bible deliberately relates the Holy Spirit to our spirits (the exact same word is

used for each in both testaments: *ruach*, רוח and *pneuma*, πνευμα respectively), it should come as no surprise that the Spirit is the Agent of this spiritual rebirth experienced internally and invisibly by all who accept the gospel of Jesus Christ.

"The Spirit is the One who gives life. The flesh benefits you not at all. The words I have spoken to you are Spirit and [eternal] life (i.e., made clear by the Spirit and offering eternal life)."

John 6:63

(11) And this (i.e., sinners) is [exactly] what some of you were – but you were washed [clean], but you were made holy, but you were made righteous by [faith in] the Person (lit., Name) of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God.  
1st Corinthians 6:9-11

(5) Not on account of [any] works which we had done in [so-called] righteousness did He save us, but [He saved us] through the washing [away of our sins which leads to our] rebirth and [to our] new beginning **from the Holy Spirit**.  
Titus 3:5

We who have listened to the Spirit's "still, small voice" (1Ki.19:12) in our inner-person, our spirit, and have responded in faith, are now children of the living God, born anew, born again, regenerated, having been given a new, eternal life in place of the spiritual death which had previously been our lot. This miracle is the work of the Spirit, accomplished powerfully and invisibly for all who receive His testimony about the One who is the only way unto salvation (Jn.14:6; Acts 4:12), our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is thus the One who is forming the Church of Jesus Christ from all who are willing to be saved by grace through faith in the truth of the gospel of the Son of God.

For the Spirit Himself testifies to our spirit that we are God's children.

Romans 8:16

(18) For it is through Him that we both have our access to the Father by means of one Spirit. (19) So then, you are no longer strangers and hangers-on, but you are fellow citizens and fellow members of the household of God, (20) established upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Himself the cornerstone, (21) in whom the entire structure is in the process of being joined together and is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, (22) in whom you too are being built up into a dwelling place of God by the Spirit.

Ephesians 2:18-22

#### b. Baptism:

"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and [with] fire".

Matthew 3:11 NKJV



(4) And gathering them together [Jesus] commanded [the disciples] not to depart from Jerusalem, but to await the promise of the Father (i.e., the Holy Spirit) "which you heard about from Me. (5) For John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Spirit not many days from now".

Acts 1:4-5

Then I remembered what the Lord had said: 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'

Acts 11:16 NIV

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is an event of profound importance and significance – as the verses above suggest, it characterizes and defines the Church Age, being impossible before the resurrection, ascension and glorification of Christ (Jn.7:39), but then honoring the commencement of this present time of the calling out of His Church and marking it out as the special time of Christ's victory (Eph.4:8). That being said, it is surprising – and incredibly sad – that so many groups over the course of the Church Age have either largely ignored the Spirit's baptism through focusing instead on the obsolete practice of water-baptism, or have concentrated instead – in a misguided and erroneous way – on the overtly miraculous manifestations of the coming of the Spirit at the first Pentecost of the Church, to the neglect of the true power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

(3) Make every effort to keep **the unity of the Spirit** through the bond of peace. (4) There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; (5) one Lord, one faith, **one baptism**; (6) one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:3-6 NIV

The "one baptism" which is the basis for the "unity of the Spirit" that we of Christ's Church are called upon to preserve is none other than the baptism of the Spirit. And while there are all manner of scriptural phrasings for the Spirit's special Church Age ministry, it is important to note at the outset that there are two major and somewhat distinct elements to this "baptism", namely (1) His making us a part of Christ when we believe (so that we are "in Christ" as a result of the Spirit baptizing us "into" Him: e.g., Matt.28:19); and (2) His subsequent taking up of residence in our physical bodies from the point when we accept Jesus as our Savior (i.e., His "indwelling").

Although the English prepositional phrases "of the Spirit", "by the Spirit" and "with the Spirit" are essentially interchangeable, nevertheless in the interest of clarity and precision it will be helpful in this study – and consistent with scripture – to use the inclusive phrase "the baptism **of** the Spirit" to refer to the Holy Spirit's special ministries in this present age in their entirety whereby He is both forming the Body of Christ and also coming to indwell all who put their faith in Jesus for salvation (as in Matt.3:11; Acts 1:4-5; Acts 11:16; Eph.4:3-6; etc.). The phrase "baptism **by** the Spirit" will be reserved for His work in forming the Bride

of Christ (we are placed "into" Christ **by** Him), while "baptism **with** the Spirit" will refer to His universal indwelling of Church Age believers (we are imbued **with** the Spirit when we believe).

These two central aspects of the Holy Spirit's work in baptizing believers are often combined wherever the Spirit and His ministration to the Church is described. They are also, however, clearly distinct and distinctive, and are therefore sometimes carefully distinguished in scripture:

Indeed, we were all baptized **by** [the] One Spirit **into** one Body (i.e., the formation of the Church by the Spirit), whether Jews or Greeks (i.e., gentiles), whether slaves or free men, and we have all been given to drink of [the] One Spirit (i.e., the pouring out of the indwelling Holy Spirit to all believers: baptism "with" the Spirit).

1st Corinthians 12:13

To properly understand why **both** main aspects of the Spirit's special Church Age ministry can be and often are referred to as baptisms, despite the distinction between the two, a few words of explanation are necessary here. The words "baptize" and "baptism" are potentially problematic for speakers of English and other modern languages in that the metaphorical use of the word-group, which is common and easily understood in Greek, is more difficult for us to accept (no doubt in large part because of the accretion over the last two millennia around the practice of water-baptism of all manner of rituals surrounding it). The morpheme *bap-* has to do with "dipping", so that the notion of identifying one thing with another by "dipping A into B" was an easy one to use figuratively – at least for the Greeks. And while liquid was present in the original idea, "baptism" for the Greeks need not have any liquid element at all. When not used literally, the idea was of identifying A with B by entering A into B. This concept thus provides the perfect analogy for "the baptism **by** the Spirit" – which has nothing whatsoever to do with literal water: through that blessed ministry we believers (i.e., "A") are "dipped" into Christ and into His Body, the Church (i.e. "B") so as to be uniquely identified with Him – indeed, so as to become an intimate and inextricable part of Him as His Bride, His Body, the Church.

(1) Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, (2) all were **baptized into** Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

1st Corinthians 10:1-2 NKJV

The baptism in the verses above is also a "dry" baptism, with the Israelites being "identified with" Moses so as to receive the consideration Moses received from the Lord in order to be delivered. The people became "one" with Moses in God's eyes, and so were all rescued (in spite of their questionable conduct to that point, and in spite of their later rebellious actions against the Lord). While this baptism is typological rather than literal, the "baptism of fire" (Matt.3:11; Lk.3:16; cf. Mk.1:8; cf. Ezek.39:6; Zech.14:12-13; 2Thes.1:6-9; Rev.14:17-20), for example,

another genuine baptism which has nothing to do with water, is absolutely literal: there we have baptism used to describe the incineration at the second advent of all unbelievers who took the mark of the beast – an "identification with and into fire" in a very real and tangible way.<sup>23</sup> It is in this sense of identification that we are to understand the "baptism **by** the Spirit", namely, as a blessed miracle which is on the one hand absolutely dry, and on the other hand places us literally "into Christ" – through the Holy Spirit's agency.

Indeed, we were all baptized **by** [the] One Spirit **into** one Body (i.e., the formation of the Church by the Spirit), whether Jews or Greeks (i.e., gentiles), whether slaves or free men, and we have all been given to drink of [the] One Spirit (i.e., the pouring out of the indwelling Holy Spirit to all believers: baptism "**with**" the Spirit).

1st Corinthians 12:13

Returning to our verse above where the two major aspects of Holy Spirit baptism are present in a distinguishable way, we first find "baptism **by** the Spirit", wherein the Holy Spirit is said to be the Agent (i.e., the "One Spirit"), the One through whom we are baptized (the Greek preposition *en*, ἐν, plus the dative case expressing the means through which we experience this baptism), while "we", those who put our faith in Jesus Christ, are said to be the recipients of this baptism, with "into one Body" giving the destination of our baptism – the Body of Christ, His Church. Following the pattern explained previously, "A is dipped into B so as to be permanently associated with / entered into B". Believers, you and I, are made one with Christ through the Holy Spirit's agency in entering us into union with Him so as to "in Christ" forevermore. That is the essential meaning of this first aspect of the Spirit's baptism (covered in more detail in the following section).

In this passage we also find the second major aspect of the Spirit's unique ministration to Church Age believers, baptism **with** the Spirit. In this second aspect of the Spirit's special ministry the focus is not upon the end result of the baptism (i.e., the "destination" as in "baptism **by**" where we are entered **into** Christ; e.g., Rom.8:1; Col.1:27); instead in this second component we find the emphasis placed upon the Agent, that is, the Spirit Himself. Paul describes the reception of the Spirit by believers here as "being given of the Spirit to drink", and it is common for the gift of the Spirit to be described in this and similar ways, "poured out" upon those who believe (e.g., Acts 2:33; 10:45; Tit.3:6; cf. Jn.7:38). While also "dry", since here again we have a water analogy ("pouring" out upon us) and an identification (i.e., the Spirit with us and we with Him), the use of the term "baptism" for this miracle is completely appropriate, the main difference between this pouring out of the Spirit and prior Old Testament examples of the same being that our "portion of the Spirit" is permanent: as long as we abide in Christ, the Spirit will abide in us.

(1) The Spirit's Baptism of Believers into Christ (baptism "by the Spirit"):

(a) Definition:

(18) Then Jesus came over and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me, (19) so go and make all nations my followers by baptizing them [by the Spirit] **into** the Person (i.e., "name") of the Father and [into the Person] of the Son and [into the Person] of the Holy Spirit, (20) and by teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you".

Matthew 28:18-20a

Spirit baptism is the means by which the Church is formed. It is the means by which those who believe become one with Jesus Christ, being made thereby part of His Body, part of His Bride, part of His Church, "in Him" or "in union with Him" from that point onwards. It is called "Spirit" baptism because it is the Holy Spirit who accomplishes this supernatural union. It is called "baptism" because, as previously explained, the new believer (A) is entered into Christ (B) so as to be intrinsically identified with Him (the result of the "dipping"). This is the most essential element of Spirit baptism, because on the one hand, even though it is entirely invisible, it is the foundation of all of the Spirit's unique Church Age ministries, and, on the other hand, there has never been a case of anyone believing in Jesus Christ since the first Pentecost of the Church who has not benefitted from this "baptism **by**" the Spirit: all believers in this age are "one with Christ" from the moment of trusting in Him, even in the case of some very early believers for whom the visible "gift of the Spirit" was not instantaneously coincident with salvation (e.g., Peter's audience at Pentecost: Acts 2:38; and the Samaritans: compare Acts 8:12 with Acts 8:16).

It is very important to note that in the case of the baptism **by** the Spirit this "dipping" into Christ has nothing to do with water. The Spirit (who is spirit) takes the new believer (his/her spirit) and makes him/her one with Jesus Christ so that the new Church Age believer immediately becomes a part of Him in a supernatural union not capable of being seen by human eyes. The Spirit accomplishes this union, making the new believer a part of the Church, the Body and the Bride of Christ, in each and every case where the gospel is heard and responded to in faith. John has proclaimed – and our Lord reaffirmed – that Spirit baptism, rather than water-baptism, would be the rule for the coming Church (Matt.3:11; Mk.1:8; Lk.3:16; Jn.1:23 with Jn.1:26; Acts 1:4-5; 11:16). It is precisely to this event, namely, the Spirit baptizing the new believer who is given and responds to the gospel, to which our Lord Jesus refers in the so-called "great commission" when He says, go and make all nations my followers by baptizing them [by the Spirit] **into** the Person[s of the Trinity]" (Matt.28:19).<sup>24</sup> Similarly, the "baptism which now saves" in 1st Peter 3:21 is Spirit baptism rather than water-baptism.

(18) For Christ died once for us on account of our sins, the Righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in [His] flesh, but having been made alive by **the Spirit**. (19) It was also by means of **the Spirit** that [Christ] visited the [angelic] spirits in prison (i.e., in Tartarus in the

Abyss), and proclaimed [His victory]. (20) [These are the angels who] were disobedient in the days of Noah at the time when God patiently waited (i.e., delayed judgment) while the ark was being built. [Having entered] **into** this ark [as a sort of baptism "into it"], a [precious] few, specifically, eight people, were brought safe through the water. (21) And it is [this true] baptism [of the Spirit] which saves you (lit. as an "antitype" or analogy to the ark's bringing of "salvation through water": just as they were saved by being "baptized" into the ark, we are saved by being baptized into Christ). **Not** any [literal] **washing** away of filth from your flesh, but an appeal to God for a clean conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ (i.e., repentance and faith result in Spirit baptism, union with Christ and resultant salvation).

1st Peter 3:18-21

As is clear from the context, Peter is not talking about water-baptism here but about the atonement of Christ, the gospel, and the work of the Holy Spirit (in both verses 18 and 19) on behalf of those who believe; and at the end of the passage he says in no uncertain terms that it is "not any washing away of filth from your flesh" which saves us, but instead the "appeal to God for a clean conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" – a clear statement of response to the gospel. Christ was "made alive" by the Spirit in resurrection, and it is analogously through the Spirit that we are spiritually reborn though previously spiritually dead (see section II.B.2.a above). Literal water only enters into the discussion above through Peter's use of the analogy of the ark: just as Noah was brought safely through the waters of the flood by being brought "**into** the ark", so also we are saved by being brought **into** Christ. **This** is the true "baptism which saves you" – "not any **washing** away of filth from your flesh" (v.21), but the baptism of the Spirit whereby we are entered **into** Jesus Christ. Just as Noah's entrance into the ark is not a "wet" baptism (indeed, he and his are preserved **from** water, not by it), so the baptism which saves us and which is the antitype to Noah's "ark baptism" is the baptism of the Holy Spirit who enters us into union with Christ when we believe, and thereby are we saved (i.e., by means of Spirit baptism, not water-baptism).

(3) Or do you not realize that as many of us as have been baptized [by the Spirit] **into** Christ have been baptized **into** His death? (4) Therefore we have been buried with Him through this baptism [of the Spirit] **into** His death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the Glory of the Father, so also we might walk in newness of life. (5) For if we have been joined together **with Him** in respect to the likeness of His death [– and we have by being spiritually baptized into Him – ], then we certainly will be [joined together with Him in the likeness] of His resurrection also.

Romans 6:3-5

The use of the Greek preposition *eis*, "into", with the accusative case in verse three above once again can only refer to Spirit baptism inasmuch as the only way we can be placed "into" Jesus Christ is through supernatural means – through the agency of the Holy Spirit. It is through this baptism, Spirit baptism, that we are

said to share in Christ's death (being "one" with Him in all He is and does and has done), so that we might also thereby share in His resurrection and walk in "newness of life" here on earth until we do.

Such is the case with almost all instances of the occurrence of the word "baptism" in the New Testament epistles.<sup>25</sup> Wherever we are said to be "baptized into Christ" or to be the beneficiaries of "baptism", it is generally the Spirit's baptism which is in view.

(26) For you are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ. (27) For as many of you as have been baptized [by the Spirit] **into** Christ, have put on Christ [like a garment]. (28) There is no longer Jew nor Greek, nor slave nor free, nor male nor female, for you are all one **in Christ Jesus**.

Galatians 3:26-28

(11) **In Him** you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, (12) buried **with Him** in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

Colossians 2:9-10 NKJV

Both passages above show that quite apart from any mention of water or ritual baptism, those who have been baptized **into** Christ have been spiritually transformed by virtue of our new position "in Christ", that is, the supernatural union with Christ which only the Spirit can accomplish.

(b) Victory at the Cross: The Basis of the Spirit's Baptism of Believers into Christ (baptism "by the Spirit"):

(25) God made Him a means of atonement [achieved] by His blood [and claimed] through faith, to give proof of His justice in leaving unpunished in divine forbearance [all] previously committed sins, (26) so as to prove His justice in the present, namely, so that He would be [shown to be] just [in this] and [justified] in justifying the one who has faith in Jesus.

Romans 3:25-26

The cross is the great dividing point of all history, with everything that came before looking forward to it, and everything that has happened since looking back to it.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, it is the foundation of all things, the bedrock of the Plan of God, and, as the passage above demonstrates, before it became a reality fulfilled, salvation was provided "on credit", so to speak. Now no one's credit is better than God's (obviously), but such is the awesome purity of His righteousness that Jesus had actually to die for the sins of the entire world before those who had previously placed their faith in Him could be formally justified. That is why, for example, pre-cross believers went to paradise below the earth after death, but today all who die in the Lord go to be with Jesus Christ in the presence of the Father in heaven (i.e., because no human being could enter the Father's presence before the atonement was an accomplished fact).<sup>27</sup> Likewise, before Christ's work

on Calvary in paying the penalty for all sin had been accomplished and validated before the throne of the Father, the universal gift of the Holy Spirit, part of the "spoils" of that magnificent victory through which Satan's rebellion has been defeated, could not be distributed to us who share that victory by virtue of our being part of Him.

For the Spirit was not yet [being poured out in Spirit baptism], because Jesus had not yet been glorified.

John 7:39b

"But, I tell you the truth, that I go away is profitable for you, because unless I go away the Encourager (comforter/counselor) will not come to you; but after I make my way [where I am going], I will send Him to you."

John 16:7 (cf. Jn.14:22; 14:26; 15:26)

The reason for our Lord's statement above to the effect that unless He should first "go away", the Holy Spirit could not be sent, depends upon this precise qualification, namely, the need for Christ's work on the cross to be an accomplished fact, and the need for that work to be proclaimed satisfactory and sufficient by the Father before the Spirit could be sent. The glories that follow our Lord's victory on the cross established His authority beyond question, a supreme authority which was confirmed in His session at the Father's right hand (Matt.28:18; Jn.14:2-3; Eph.1:20-23; Phil.2:9-11; Col.1:13-20; 2:15; Heb.2:14-15 Rev.1:18). After Christ ascended to heaven and was seated in glory with the Father on His heavenly throne (Ps.110:1; Acts 2:32-36; 5:30-31; Rom.8:34; Heb.1:3; 12:2), the way was clear for the "prisoners" to be freed (i.e., the transfer of pre-cross believers to the third heaven: Ps.146:7; Is.14:17; 42:7; 49:9; 61:1; Matt.12:29; 1Pet.3:22), and for the spoils of that victory to be distributed (Ps.68:18; Jn.16:7; Eph.4:8), by far the most significant of which is the gift of the Holy Spirit to us who form Christ's Church: even "the gates of hell" cannot withstand such a powerful assault (Matt.16:18).

(18) Then Jesus came over and said to them, "**All authority in heaven and on earth** has been given to me, (19) so go and make all nations my followers by baptizing them [by the Spirit] into the Person (i.e., "name") of the Father and [into the Person] of the Son and [into the Person] of the Holy Spirit, (20) and by teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you".

Matthew 28:18-20a

By winning the decisive battle of the satanic rebellion through His death which expiates all human sin, Jesus Christ has won "the Name which is above every Name" (Phil.2:9), and the authority which attends that victory and that Name (Dan.7:14; Rom.14:9; 1Cor.15:27; Eph.1:20-22; Phil.2:9-11; Col.1:16-20; Heb.1:2; 2:8; 1Pet.3:22; Rev.11:15; 17:14; 19:16; cf. Acts 2:36; 10:36). The Spirit may "now" be given, because Christ has won the victory, He has been glorified, He has received – officially – absolute authority over the entire universe. It is from this point of view that the passage above, Matthew 28:18-20, is properly to be

considered: our Lord Jesus is speaking about Spirit baptism here (baptism "into" the Persons of the Trinity), because now it is possible on the basis of His reception of supreme heavenly authority for that blessed union of believers with Him and the Father and the Spirit to take place – through the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

(c) The Results and Significance of the Spirit's Baptism of Believers into Christ (baptism "by the Spirit"):

Because Christ has won the victory of the cross for which He came into the world, the Spirit is free to do for believers in this age something previously impossible, namely enter us into union with our dear Lord Jesus when we believe.

(10) The prophets diligently investigated and inquired about this salvation, when they prophesied about **this grace [that was to come] to you**. (11) For they were eager to discover the precise time the Spirit of Christ within them was signifying as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and **the glories that would follow**. (12) For it was revealed to them that in prophesying these things, they were not so much serving themselves as they were you – and these same things have now been proclaimed to you through those who gave you the gospel through the Holy Spirit, sent from heaven – even angels want to look into these things.  
1st Peter 1:10-12

The "glories" of this present age, founded upon the bedrock of the work of Christ, are centered on the Holy Spirit, first and foremost of which is His baptism of us **into** Jesus Christ whereby we become one with Him forever, part of His Body, His Bride, His Church, in an integral and supernatural way.

(26) For you are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ. (27) For as many of you as have been **baptized [by the Spirit] into** Christ, have put on Christ [like a garment]. (28) There is no longer Jew nor Greek, nor slave nor free, nor male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.  
Galatians 3:26-28

This fundamental change of status for believers of the Church Age while essentially positional (as opposed to being something we are visually or audibly or tangibly experiencing in an empirical way at present), is nonetheless absolutely "real", and something with which prior generations of believers were not blessed. So even while it is true that the Church consists of everyone who has believed since the garden of Eden, and that all believers from that point to Christ's return will be one with Him as His Bride forever, it is in this age alone that believers have been blessed to possess this blessing of actually being one with Christ **not** as an anticipation of a future reality, but as a very real and considerable blessing here on earth which is the basis for all of the other unique blessings of this "age of the Spirit".

This unique relationship that believers of this present age enjoy by virtue of being baptized by the Holy Spirit "into Christ" is described in scripture in a variety of



illuminating ways. Having been supernaturally entered "into Christ", we believers of the Church Age are now one with Him (theologically, often described as being in "union with Christ"). This unique union between the believer and Jesus Christ our dear Lord – which is accomplished by the Spirit putting us "into Him" (baptized "by the Spirit *into* Christ") – is expressed in the Bible as our now being . . .

1) "**in Christ**" (or "in the Lord", etc.):

(1) So now, there [awaits] no judgment of condemnation for those who are **in Christ Jesus**. (2) For the law of **the Spirit** of life **in Christ Jesus** has freed you from the Law of sin and death.

Romans 8:1-2

For if anyone is **in Christ**, that person is a **new creation**. Prior things have passed away. Look! New things have come.

2nd Corinthians 5:17

For we are His workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus** for [the purpose of accomplishing] good works, which [very works] God has prepared ahead of time for us, that we might walk in them.

Ephesians 2:10

These three passages demonstrate the momentous transformation inherent in our new union with our dear Lord Jesus, its accomplishment by the Spirit (Rom.8:1-2), its production of an entirely new person "in Christ" – from God's point of view (2Cor.5:17) – and its ultimate purpose of spiritual growth, progress and production for the Lord in whom we now "are", supernaturally, intimately, and collectively. The phrasing of this profound change wrought by the Spirit when we believe is so economically and pithily put that it is easy to miss its tremendous significance when we encounter the words "in Christ" in our reading of scripture. Suffice it to say that this fundamental transformation we have experienced by grace through faith, accomplished by the Spirit "baptizing us *into* Christ", has the most sublime consequences for good in every way, both temporal and especially eternal, as is evidence by its ubiquitous use in the New Testament epistles (Rom.3:24; 6:11; 6:23; 8:1; 8:2; 8:39; 9:1; 12:5; 14:14; 15:17; 16:2-3; 16:7-13; 16:22; 1Cor.1:2; 1:4-5; 1:30; 3:1; 4:10; 4:15; 4:17; 7:22; 7:39; 9:1-2; 11:11; 15:18-19; 15:22; 15:31; 15:58; 16:19; 16:24; 2Cor.1:19-20; 2:12; 2:14; 2:17; 3:14; 5:17; 5:21; 12:2; 12:19; 13:4; Gal.1:22; 2:4; 2:17; 3:14; 3:26; 3:28; 5:6; 5:10; Eph.1:1; 1:3-4; 1:6-7; 1:10-13; 1:15; 1:20; 2:5-7; 2:10; 2:13; 2:15-16; 2:18; 2:21-22; 3:6; 3:11-12; 3:21; 4:1; 4:17; 4:21; 4:32; 5:8; 6:1; 6:10; 6:21; Phil.1:1; 1:13-14; 1:26; 2:1; 2:19; 2:24; 2:29; 3:1; 3:3; 3:9; 3:14; 4:1-2; 4:7; 4:10; 4:19; 4:21; Col.1:2; 1:4; 1:14; 1:28; 2:3; 2:6-7; 2:10-12; 3:3; 3:18; 3:20; 3:7; 3:17; 1Thes.1:1; 1:18; 2Thes.1:1; 1:12; 3:4; 3:12; 1Tim.1:14; 2Tim.1:9; 2:10; 3:12; 3:15; Philem.1:8; 1:20; 1:23; 1Pet.3:16; 5:10; 5:14; 1Jn.2:5-6; 2:24; 2:27-28; 3:6; 3:17; 3:24; 5:20; Rev.1:9; 14:13). Rather than the word "Christian", "in Christ" is the biblical terminology of choice to describe the believer in scripture – no doubt because it

more powerfully and accurately represents the nature of our new relationship with our dear Lord.<sup>28</sup>

(20) "And I do not ask concerning these only, [Father], but also concerning all of those who believe in Me through their word, (21) so that all [of them] may be one, as You, Father, are in Me and I also am in You, so that they also themselves may be one in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. (22) And I have given them the glory You have given Me, so that they may be one as We are one." John 17:20-22

2) "**of Christ**" (or "Christ's", etc.):

But you are not under the control of the flesh, but under the control of the Spirit – if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, that person does not **belong to Him** (lit., is not "of Him", e.g., "of / belonging to" Jesus Christ).

Romans 8:9

By using this phrasing, "of Christ", scripture is also describing the special relationship of the believer baptized into Christ by the Holy Spirit, but from our Lord's point of view in possessing us: being "in Him", we "belong to Him" or are "of Him" in a deeply intimate way (Mk.9:41; Rom.1:6; 14:8; 1Cor.3:23; 15:23; 2Cor.10:7; Gal.3:29; 5:24; 1Pet.4:11; cf. Rom.1:1; 8:35; 15:16; 16:16; 1Cor.4:1; 7:22; 9:21; 11:3; 2Cor.5:20; Eph.6:6; Phil.1:1; Jas.2:7; 1Jn.2:24; 2:27). Nothing could be more wonderful nor more sublime than being the special and beloved property of Jesus Christ, our dear Lord and Savior – and nothing could make us more secure.

(38) For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, neither angelic nor human authorities, neither things present nor things to come, neither heavenly powers, (39) be they the highest [of the elect] or the lowest [of the fallen], nor any other created thing [on this earth] will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:38-39

3) "**fellowship with Christ**" (Gr. *koinonia*; 1Cor.1:9; 10:16; cf. Tit.1:4; Jude 1:4):

What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you that you too may have fellowship with us – and indeed our [true] **fellowship** is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.<sup>29</sup>

1st John 1:3

[It is] through these [divine blessings] that the great and honorable promises have been granted to us, so that through them we might become **partakers of the divine nature** (i.e., in contrast with our earthly sinful nature), having [through salvation] escaped earthly corruption and its lust.

2nd Peter 1:4

In the first passage above the fellowship that all believers should share one with another (cf. 2Cor.8:23; Philem.1:6; 1:17; Heb.10:33) is based upon the fellowship all of us do possess, having been baptized into Christ by the Holy Spirit. Similarly, in the second passage we see that this fellowship of ours with the Lord (and with the Father and the Spirit as well), while absolute in terms of our status as those "in Christ", is capable of being deepened as we grow in grace (cf. Eph.3:6; Phil.3:10; Heb.3:1; 3:14; 1Pet.5:1) – or negatively affected if we proceed in the opposite direction:

(6) If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we are lying and are not acting truthfully. (7) But if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we do have fellowship one with one another (i.e., we with the Father and the Son as well as with other believers; cf. v.3), and the blood of Jesus His Son is cleansing us from all sin.

1st John 1:6-7

Furthermore, this fellowship with Christ (and with the entire Trinity) is specifically said to be a province of the Spirit (a result of our being baptized by into Christ by Him):

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of (the [Father]) God, and the **fellowship** of (i.e., coming from) the Holy Spirit be with you all.  
2nd Corinthians 13:14

As such, this positional fellowship results – in the case of all who respond to the Spirit – in that fellowship bearing fruit through spiritual growth, progress and production (cf. Acts 2:42; Rom.12:13; Rom.15:26; 2Cor.8:4; 8:23; 9:13; Gal.2:9; 6:6; Phil.1:5; 3:10; 4:15; Heb.13:16):

(1) If [you have] any comfort in Christ, if [you have] any encouragement from [God's] love, if [you have] any **fellowship** of (i.e., coming from) the Spirit, if [you have] any sympathy and compassion [for fellow believers], (2) then make my joy full by being of one mind, of one love, of one heart, thinking the same thing, (3) doing nothing out of selfish competitiveness or self-importance, but in humility, considering each other as more important than yourselves, (4) with each of you looking out not for himself but for each other. (5) Have the [very same] attitude which also Christ Jesus did.

Philippians 2:1-5

"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me."

John 15:4 NKJV

4) "**Christ in us**":

To all [believers] God desired to make known what wealth there is in this glorious mystery regarding the gentiles, for it is that **Christ** – your hope of glory – **is in**

**you.**

Colossians 1:27

The indwelling of Jesus Christ is indeed a glorious mystery. No more glorious mystery could there be than the presence, through our union with Him by means of the Spirit's baptism, of our dear Lord within all of us who belong to Him.

On that day [of the coming of the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn.14:15-19)] you will know that I am in my Father, and you are in Me, and I am in you.

John 14:20 (cf. Rom.8:10; 2Cor.13:5; Eph.3:17; Col.1:27)

Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them."

John 14:23 NIV

(20) "And I do not ask concerning these only, [Father], but also concerning all of those who believe in Me through their word, (21) so that all [of them] may be one, as You, Father, are in Me and I also am in You, so that they also themselves may be one in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. (22) And I have given them the glory You have given Me, so that they may be one as We are one."

John 17:20-22

The truth of our dear Lord Jesus' indwelling presence (resulting from Spirit baptism: 1Jn.3:24; 4:13) is, as the passages above demonstrate, a source of great encouragement and comfort to believers. It should also be a means of focus and motivation when we realize, as we constantly should, that more than being aware of our conduct, words and thoughts, Jesus Christ is in us – if we truly belong to Him (Rom.8:10; cf. Gal.4:19; Eph.3:17; 1Jn.3:24; 4:4; 4:12-13; Rev.3:20).

Examine yourselves to see whether you still stand steady in the faith. Put your qualifications [as Christians] to the test. Or did you not know this about yourselves, that **Jesus Christ is in you** – unless you have been disqualified.

2nd Corinthians 13:5

##### 5) "**Christ's Body**":

(12) For just as the body is one and has many members, and the members of the body, though many, are [yet] a single body, so also is Christ. (13) Indeed, we were all baptized by [the] One Spirit into [that] **one Body**, whether Jews or Greeks (i.e., gentiles), whether slaves or free men, and we have all been given to drink of [the] One Spirit.

1st Corinthians 12:12-13

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

1st Corinthians 12:27 NIV

Being one with Him by means of the Spirit's baptism (1Cor.12:13; Eph.4:4), we believers are now intimately part of the Body of Christ, one with Him and with each other forever (Rom.12:4-5; 1Cor.6:15; 10:17; cf. Matt.26:26; Mk.14:22;

Lk.22:19; 1Cor.10:16; 11:24; Eph.2:16; 3:6; 4:4; 4:12; 4:16; 5:23; 5:30; Col.1:18; 1:24; 2:19; 3:15).

(22) And [the Father] subordinated all things under [Christ's] feet and gave Him [as] Head over all things in the Church (23) which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills up all things in all ways.

Ephesians 1:22-23

#### 6) "**Christ's Bride**":

(25) Husbands, love your wives as also Christ loved His Church and gave Himself over [to death] on her behalf, (26) so that He might sanctify her, having purified her by the washing of the water [of truth] in [His] Word. (27), so that He might Himself [and] for Himself present His Church in glory, without spot or blemish, but so that she might [instead] be holy and without blame.

Ephesians 5:25-27

At salvation, all believers become part of the Bride of Christ by means of the Spirit's baptizing of us into oneness with Him. As the eternal complement of our Lord, we believers, the Church of Jesus Christ, are destined and designed to be with Him forever (Matt.9:15; Matt.25:1-13; Mk.2:19; Lk.5:34; Jn.3:29; 2Cor.11:2-3; Eph.1:22-23; 5:22-33; Rev.19:7-14; 21:2-4; 21:9ff.; 22:17). We are eternally part of Him as His Bride, washed of our sin by His blood, loved, cherished and possessed by Him in a way that even a perfect human marriage could only approximate (Eph.5:25-32; Rev.19:7).

(7) "Let us rejoice and be jubilant, and let us give glory to Him, because the wedding of the Lamb has come, and His Bride (lit., "wife"; cf. Rev.21:9) has prepared herself. (8) And it has been given her to wear a pure, resplendent [gown] of the finest material (now this fine material represents the righteous acts of His holy ones [believers])." (9) And [the angel] said to me, "Write this down: Happy are those who have been called to the [wedding] supper of the Lamb! These [words] of mine are the true words of God."

Revelation 19:7-9

#### 7) "**Adopted**" (as sons and daughters of God in Jesus Christ):

For you have not received a spirit of slavery [leading you] back to fear, but [the] **Spirit of adoption** in whom we cry out, "Abba! Father!"

Romans 8:15

(4) But when the fullness of time came, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, (5) in order that He might redeem those under the Law, in order that we might receive the adoption. (6) And since you are sons, God sent **the Spirit of His Son** into your hearts, crying, "Abba, Father!"

Galatians 4:4-6

Through being baptized by the Holy Spirit into Christ, we believers have become sons and daughters of the living God (Rom.8:23). Previously excluded from having any part with God's holy people (Eph.2:12), we who believe have now been adopted by God through our faith in Jesus Christ and the Spirit's baptism. We have been entered into the family of God by the Spirit, no longer considered as outsiders subject to God's wrath because of sin, but made His children through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ (Jn.1:12-13; Rom.8:16-17; Gal.3:21-4:7; Eph.3:15; Heb.12:4-11; 1Jn.3:1-2).

(16) For the Spirit Himself testifies to our spirit that we are God's children. (17) And if we are God's children, then we are also His heirs, even fellow heirs of Christ – that is if we have indeed suffered with Him so that we might also be glorified together with Him.  
Romans 8:16-17

8) "**One**" (in Christ)":

(20) "And I do not ask concerning these only, [Father], but also concerning all of those who believe in Me through their word, (21) so that all [of them] may be one, as You, Father, are in Me and I also am in You, so that they also themselves may be one in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. (22) And I have given them the glory You have given Me, so that they may be one as We are one."  
John 17:20-22 (cf. Jn.17:11)

Being in Christ by means of the Spirit's baptism, we believers are also all "one" in Him. This unity – for which our Lord prayed in Gethsemane before dying to provide it – is both actual (in terms of our position: Gal.3:28; Eph.2:14-15), and potential: being "one" in Christ by the Spirit, we all also ought to act that way through the Spirit (Rom.12:16; 15:5; 1Cor.1:10; 2Cor.13:11; Eph.4:13):

If [you have] any comfort in Christ, if [you have] any encouragement from [God's] love, if [you have] any fellowship with the Spirit, if [you have] any sympathy and compassion [for fellow believers], then make my joy full by being of one mind, of one love, of one heart, thinking the same thing, doing nothing out of selfish competitiveness or self-importance, but in humility, considering each other as more important than yourselves, with each of you looking out not for himself but for each other. Have the [very same] attitude which also Christ Jesus did.

Philippians 2:1-5

(2) Indwelling (baptism "with the Spirit"):

Indeed, we were all baptized by [the] One Spirit into one Body (i.e., the formation of the Church by the Spirit), whether Jews or Greeks (i.e., gentiles), whether slaves or free men, and ***we have all been given to drink of [the] One Spirit*** (i.e., the pouring out of the indwelling Holy Spirit to all believers: baptism "with" the Spirit).

1st Corinthians 12:13

(a) The Prophecy of the Gift: Because of the great significance and importance of the coming of the Spirit – the fundamental factor in the explosive expansion of the Church in the streaming in of the gentiles since that first Pentecost – the gift of His outpouring upon all believers was specifically promised and prophesied by our Lord and by His herald, John (as well as being foreshadowed in Old Testament prophecy as well: compare Joel 2:28ff. with Acts 2:16-18).

"Now I am baptizing you with water for the purpose of [your] repentance. But the One coming after me is more powerful than me and I am not worthy to carry His sandals. It is He who is the One who will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."

Matthew 3:11 (cf. Mk.1:8; Lk.3:16; Jn.1:33)

(4) And gathering them together [Jesus] commanded [the disciples] not to depart from Jerusalem, but to await the promise of the Father (i.e., the Holy Spirit) "which you heard about from Me. (5) For John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Spirit not many days from now".

Acts 1:4-5

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Acts 1:8

(b) Baptized "with" the Spirit (as opposed to "by" the Spirit): At salvation, the Holy Spirit places the new believer into union with Christ (i.e., the baptism "by" the Spirit as we have been describing it, covered immediately above); the Spirit also takes up residence within the new believer, indwelling him or her for as long as the person in question belongs to Christ in this life (described here as baptism "with" the Spirit). The baptism "of" the Spirit (the term we are using for both aspects of the Spirit's salvation ministries to Church Age believers) is often described in scripture as "with" the Spirit, and for good reason, namely, His taking up of residence in the believer's body is a powerful and perceptible reality (whereas our union with Christ, wonderful as it is, has to be understood and accepted by faith alone) – and that was even more so the case when, in the early days of the Church, this coming of the Spirit was accompanied by visible, and audible manifestations.

Now I am baptizing you with water for the purpose of [your] repentance. But the One coming after me is more powerful than me and I am not worthy to carry His sandals. It is He who is the One who will baptize you **with** the Holy Spirit and with fire.

Matthew 3:11

(4) And gathering them together [Jesus] commanded [the disciples] not to depart from Jerusalem, but to await the promise of the Father (i.e., the Holy Spirit) "which you heard about from Me. (5) For John baptized with water, but you will

be baptized **with** the Spirit not many days from now".  
Acts 1:4-5

Then I remembered what the Lord had said: 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized **with** the Holy Spirit.'  
Acts 11:16 NIV

(c) The Gift of the Spirit: Being baptized "with" the Spirit, having Him come "onto" us and thus into us at salvation – occasionally accompanied in the early days of the apostles miraculous manifestations of special "sign gifts" (e.g., Acts 2:2-4; 10:44-46; 19:6; cf. 8:17; not repeated after a certain point) – is sometimes described as the **gift** of the Spirit Jn.4:10; Acts 2:38; 8:20; 10:45; 11:17; cf. Acts 1:4):

"We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."  
Act 5:32 NIV

As such, this gift of the Spirit (i.e., being baptized "with" Him – His taking up of residence within us) complements and is intimately connected to **the** Gift of Jesus Christ (Rom.5:16-18; 6:23; 2Cor.9:15; Eph.2:8; Heb.6:4; Jas.1:17; 1Pet.3:7; Rev.22:17), through whose victory the gift of the Spirit has been made possible (Eph.4:8; cf. Ps.68:18; Jn.16:7; Matt.28:18-19).

(d) The Pouring out of the Gift of the Spirit:

Indeed, we were all baptized by [the] One Spirit into one Body (i.e., the formation of the Church by the Spirit), whether Jews or Greeks (i.e., gentiles), whether slaves or free men, and we have all been **given to drink** of [the] One Spirit (i.e., the pouring out of the indwelling Holy Spirit to all believers: baptism "with" the Spirit).  
1st Corinthians 12:13

The manner of the Spirit's coming is sometimes described by analogy of a "pouring out" of liquid (cf. Is.44:3; Ezek.39:29; Joel 2:28-29; Zech.12:10; Acts 2:17-18), as in the verse above where we believers partake of Him so as to be infused with Him. In this description, the comparison of the Spirit to water provides the connection between water-baptism and Spirit baptism, namely, the baptism of the Spirit (which has nothing to do with actual water) is compared to the pouring out of water – and we believers are the receptacle onto which and into which the "liquid" is poured. Sadly, many Christian groups reverse this analogy in wrongly continuing and inappropriately elevating water-baptism over Spirit baptism (which have nothing whatsoever to do with each other beyond the illustration provided by the former used in scripture to illuminate the latter).

"Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and



hear."

Acts 2:33 NKJV

And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.

Acts 10:45 NKJV

(5) – Not on account of [any] works which we had done in [so-called] righteousness did He save us, but [He saved us] through the washing [away of our sins which leads to our] rebirth and [to our] new beginning from the Holy Spirit, (6) whom He **poured out** upon us bountifully through Jesus Christ our Savior.

Titus 3:5-6

As a result of this pouring out of the Spirit, all believers in our present age have the Spirit indwelling us, "bubbling up" from within us to motivate us, guide us, and teach us the truth (which is the "water of life" corresponding to the Spirit poured out).

(38) "The one who believes in Me as the scripture has said [to do], out of his belly will flow streams of living water". (39) [Jesus] said this about the [Holy] Spirit (i.e., the One who illuminates the life-giving "water of truth") which those who believe in Him were destined to receive: [at that point, however,] the Spirit had not yet [being poured out in Spirit baptism], because Jesus had not yet been glorified.

John 7:38-39 (cf. Jer.17:13; Is.12:3; 55:1)

(e) The Residence of the Spirit "within" us: The Holy Spirit has always been the One who teaches believers the truth, leads us in the way in which we should go, and encourages, motivates and empowers us – when we are willing to respond to Him and the truth He ministers to us. The main difference and distinction between the economy of the Spirit's ministry since His coming during the first Pentecost of the Church Age and that of His ministering to believers before that pivotal event is that while before He was "with" believers (cf. Hag.2:5), now He has actually taken up residence "in us" – just as our Lord explained:

(16) I will ask the Father, and He will give you another comforter (i.e., "encourager") to be with you forever – (17) the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, for it neither sees Him, nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He abides with you [now], but He will be **in you**.

John 14:16-17

The difference between the Spirit's ministering to believers "at their side" on the one hand, and His taking up of residence within us to guide, direct and empower us "from within" is at once both subtle and profound. To appreciate that difference will require the explication of all of the Spirit's Church Age ministries (covered below in section II.B.3 "The Post-Salvation Ministries of the Spirit "). It

will suffice here to contrast the linear expansion of the Church from Eden to Pentecost with its geometrical explosion since the coming of the Spirit: in an analogous way, such is the dynamic and so potentially geometrically life-altering and empowering nature of the Spirit's indwelling in contrast to His former external support. Believers of this age, while appreciating the Spirit and His ministrations just as deeply, will never have occasion to say as David did, "take not thy Holy Spirit from me" (Ps.51:11).

(f) The Anointing of the Spirit: While water is descriptive of the pouring out of the Spirit, oil, as we have seen above (section I.C.2.a), is a biblical symbol for the Spirit once poured out onto (so as to be in) the believer. The analogy in this case is to the anointing with oil which, in Israel, was a symbol of authority (cf. the anointing of priests and kings: e.g., Ex.28:41; 40:15; 1Sam.9:16; 16:3). Indeed, in each such case, the anointing with literal olive oil was symbolic of the actual but invisible anointing of the Spirit which God gave to His representatives (conditionally, as the case of Saul shows: compare 1Sam.10:6 with 1Sam.16:14). Our Lord Jesus Christ, the anointed One (i.e., the Messiah, Heb. *Meschiach*; Gr. *Christos*; cf. Lk.4:18; Acts 4:27; 10:38; Heb.1:9), glorified through His great victory of the cross, won the right to send us the Holy Spirit (section II.B.2.b.1.b above). As our Lord combines in Himself both anointed offices of High Priest and Eternal King, we who belong to Him have also been "commissioned" for serving Him through the Spirit's anointing (a mark of the Lord's authority). We are thus now blessed to be permanently anointed with the Spirit to assist us in serving Jesus Christ in whatever capacity He chooses to employ us (according to the gifts we have been given by the Spirit in the ministries assigned by our Lord; see section II.B.3.d.1 below).

(21) Now the One who has given us security in regard to Christ together with you and who has anointed us (i.e., with the Spirit) is God – (22) [Yes, He] has also sealed us and given us His pledge of the Spirit in our hearts.  
2nd Corinthians 1:21-22

And you all have an anointing from the Holy One. And you all know [this (i.e., v.19 and previous)].  
1st John 2:20

But as for you, the anointing which you received from Him remains in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you [this (i.e., v.26 and previous)]. But just as His anointing teaches you about all things and is true and not false, so also as He has taught you, remain in Him.  
1st John 2:27

(g) The Sanctifying work of the Spirit making us a Temple of God: Because all believers will continue to inhabit bodies infested with sin as long as we are in this world, in order for the Father and the Son to take up residence within us (Jn.14:23), we must first be sanctified, that is, made holy, through the Spirit's ministry (see section II.B.3.b.3.c.iii below, "Sanctification"). Just as the Spirit set

a barrier of sanctification between the third heaven and the corrupted universe after Satan's revolt, so also we believers benefit from His unique sanctifying and separating ministries. Although our physical status will not change absolutely as long as we are in these earthly bodies, the Spirit's indwelling presence provides the necessary sanctification for the presence of the Son and the Father within us. We are thus made, as scripture describes it, a "temple" or sacred place by means of the Spirit's entering into us. This wonderful truth illuminates the holiness, importance and sacredness of every believer in Jesus Christ indwelt by Him as a temple through the Spirit's sanctifying presence. Being temples of God, we are special and specially protected by Him – and certainly ought to behave ourselves in a manner compatible with that blessed status.

(16) Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? (17) If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple.  
1st Corinthians 3:16-17 NIV

Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?  
1st Corinthians 6:19 NKJV

What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."  
2nd Corinthians 6:16 NIV

(21) In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. (22) And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.  
Ephesians 2:22 NIV

You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.  
1Peter 2:5 NIV

(h) The Preeminent Sign of the Spirit's Work: Although the invisible (in all cases) and imperceptible ministries of the Spirit (such as His entering of the believer into union with Christ) are once some of the most wonderful and glorious, the Spirit's taking up of residence within the believer, His being poured out upon those who believe, is the preeminent sign of His presence – and for that reason was accompanied by the dramatic manifestation of "sign gifts" at the first Pentecost of the Church (and occasionally afterwards as well: Acts 8:15-17; 11:15; 10:44-46; 15:8; 19:6; cf. Rom.8:23; Gal.3:2-5; Heb.6:4-5).

(1) When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. (2) Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. (3) They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. (4) All of them were filled

with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Acts 2:1-4 NIV

To this inaugural demonstration of the Spirit's presence and power we may compare His prophesied pouring out upon Israel at the second advent (Is.32:14-15; 44:3; 59:20-21; Ezek.36:26-27; 39:29; Joel 2:28-29; Zech.12:10; cf. Ezek.37:9; Acts 2:16ff.), and His visible lighting upon our Lord at John's baptism of Him (Matt.3:16; Mk.1:10; Lk.3:22; Jn.1:32-33). It is for this reason, namely, the astounding and undeniable arrival of the Spirit at the inception of the Church Age (Acts 2:1-4; 8:15-17; 11:15; 10:44-46; 15:8; 19:6; cf. Rom.8:23; Gal.3:2-5; Heb.6:4-5), that scripture sums up all of His special ministries during this age into the phrase "the baptism of the Holy Spirit".

(i) The Universality of the Indwelling of the Spirit:

(13) Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"), (14) that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might **receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.**

Galatians 3:13-14 NKJV

The dramatic and visible outpouring of the Spirit at the first Pentecost of the Church – wherein the Spirit arrived as a mighty wind, was actually seen to light upon the assembled believers in the appearance of "tongues of fire" (Acts 2:3; compare His appearance "in the likeness of a dove" at our Lord's baptism: Matt.3:16; Mk.1:10; Lk.3:22; Jn.1:32), with the result that those upon whom He came began to speak "in other languages" (i.e., "tongues") – was never repeated. While it is true that during the early days of the apostles only (see section II.B.2.b.2.1 below, "The Progression of the Gift"), scripture does record a handful of instances wherein the Spirit's coming upon new believers (or upon those who had become believers before Pentecost) was accompanied by the "sign gifts" (i.e., temporary gifts of **visibly** miraculous power) of tongues and prophecy (Acts 2:1-4; 8:15-17; 11:15; 10:44-46; 15:8; 19:6), and although we may extrapolate from these instances the likely possibility that during those very early days of the Church other such instances not recorded in scripture likewise occurred (cf. Rom.8:23; Gal.3:2-5; Heb.6:4-5), it is nevertheless the case that even while the apostles were yet alive these dramatic and perceptible signs of the Spirit's taking up of residence in new believers, never universal in any case (Acts 8:26ff.; 9:1ff.), ceased to occur. For example, there is not a single recorded instance of any similar event during the entirety of Paul's three missionary journeys (the reception of the Spirit by those who had become believers **before** Pentecost at Acts 19:6 being exceptional for that reason). This cessation represents the first stage of the transition from an era where miracles and miraculous gifts filled an essential need in the incipient Church – but would be phased out once the Church became established and the Word of God had been completed (precisely in order that we believers might give that Word our primary attention; as

mentioned above, these issues are covered in detail in section II.B.2.b.2.1 below, "The Progression of the Gift"). Just as no such "sign gifts" are (truly and legitimately) being given or employed today, so also these gifts were phased out by the Spirit during apostolic times – along with their dramatic appearance at Pentecost and occasionally thereafter. But, most importantly for our purposes here, just as the absence of these gifts at salvation and afterwards did not in any way negate the universal indwelling of the Spirit for all who came to believe in the days of the apostles, so also today the fact that the Spirit's baptism of us, our being baptized **with** Him, is not overtly obvious when we come to believe in Christ, should in no way be taken to mean that His indwelling of believers is not universal – for it most assuredly is (Jn.7:38-39; 1Cor.3:16; 6:19; 2Cor.1:22; Gal.3:2-3; 3:5; 3:14; 4:6; 1Thes.4:8; Heb.6:4; Jas.4:4-6; Jude 1:19):

But you are not under the control of the flesh, but under the control of the Spirit – if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, that person does not **belong to Him** (lit., "of Him", e.g., "of / belonging to" Jesus Christ).

Romans 8:9

Everyone who is a believer in Jesus Christ has the indwelling presence of the Spirit, and, as the verse above makes very plain, anyone who does **not** have the indwelling of the Spirit, who has not, that is, been "baptized **with** Him", does not belong to Christ at all, for the Spirit's baptism is the "one baptism" of the Church in all its wondrous and manifold aspects (Eph.4:5), and is universal among all who believe – even though today (as was coming to be the case even while the apostles continued to minister) there are no dramatic and obvious initial signs of that indwelling when first we come to put our faith in Jesus Christ.

(16) I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter to be with you forever – (17) **the Spirit** of truth whom the world cannot receive, for it neither sees Him, nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He abides with you, and **[He] will be in you.**

John 14:16-17

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead **dwells in you**, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through **His Spirit who dwells in you.**

Romans 8:11 NASB

(6) And since you are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, "Abba, Father!"

Galatians 4:6

Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit **who lives in us.**

2nd Timothy 1:14 NIV

(j) The Results and Effects of the Gift: Seen or unseen, the Spirit is certainly felt by all believers after salvation, and the importance of His presence within us cannot be underestimated (even if its particular significance is difficult to describe and distinguish from His ministry to Old Testament believers).

"Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me."

Psalm 51:11 NIV

As the anointed king of Israel, David has a special unction of the Holy Spirit similar to the indwelling presence of the Spirit which all believers today enjoy. How important this was to him – and how deeply he realized the significance of the Spirit's ministry to him in his walk with the Lord – is clear from the verse above. But while David could lose the special gift of the Spirit (as Saul had done: compare 1Sam.10:6 with 1Sam.16:14), Church Age believers have His presence as long as they belong to Christ – He is our security and our pledge of salvation (2Cor.1:21-22; 5:5; Eph.1:13-14). The reason that many believers today do not experience the comfort, the power, and the joy of living with and for the Lord obvious from David's life and Psalms is entirely due to our own failure to live up to the promise and the potential of the dynamism of the Spirit's presence within us (see section II.B.3.b below, "Empowerment of the Believer"). What is needed on our part is a recognition and a determined effort to remember the truth of how blessed we are to have the Spirit within us, as well as to make maximum use of the spiritual opportunities His presence offers. Even given a lackluster performance for the Lord and a lukewarm response to the Spirit's prodding, guidance and support, so much of our relationship with the Lord is dependent on the Spirit's ministries that we would feel His loss immediately. Indeed, Christians today generally have no idea how wonderful having the Spirit is (though we certainly should). This is partially because maximizing the benefit of His presence only comes from knowing and believing and responding consistently to Him through the knowledge of His ministries and His empowerment of us.

(3) And not only this, but let us glory in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces patience, (4) and patience produces proven character, and proven character produces hope – (5) and this hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us (cf. 2Tim.1:7).

Romans 5:3-5

(k) The Means of Imparting the Gift: While the Holy Spirit is, by definition, the One who baptizes us into Christ via the baptism "by" the Spirit, as with many things in God's economy the entire Trinity is involved in the process. Christ was also prophesied to be the One who would "baptize you with the Spirit" (Matt.3:11; Mk.1:8; Lk.3:16; Jn.1:33 et al.); Jesus says He will send the Spirit (Jn.15:26; 16:7), and He is the One who received the promise of this gift of the Spirit from the Father (Lk.24:49; Acts 2:33) – and our Lord also tells us that the Father will send the Spirit "in My Name" (Jn.14:26). Rather than being grounds for confusion (or dissension as in the "Great Schism" between the Roman Catholic and Greek

Orthodox churches occasioned by the *filioque* clause regarding this matter), what we have is a very common situation in scripture where, when it is a question of joint action, the Bible often emphasizes the role of One member of the Trinity or another, depending upon the precise circumstances. The important point is that the gift of the Spirit is a joint action of the entire Trinity – who are always "one" in an ineffably perfect and complete way in essence, and in all they have ever planned, said or done.

(l) The Progression of the Gift: Because of the potential for (and many historical examples of) confusion over this issue, a few words need to be said about the differences between the initial coming of the Spirit, His subsequent manifestations in the early days of the apostles, and things as they now stand (as they have in fact stood since even before the apostles left the scene). First of all, while it is true for reasons having to do with the transition between the Age of Israel and the Age of the Church that for a limited time there was occasionally a lag between the Spirit's baptism of believers into Christ and His coming to indwell those who had believed, that distinction has long since passed. Today, as demonstrated above, the indwelling of the Spirit is universal in the case of all who accept Jesus Christ as their Savior – and from the point of salvation. Secondly, this indwelling of the Spirit is the same today as it was at the first Pentecost of the Church Age, and in all subsequent descriptions of salvation in the book of Acts. The fact that on a few occasions early in the apostolic era the Spirit's coming was associated with visible miracles and observably miraculous activity does not mean that His taking up of residence within us when we believe is any different or any less miraculous in truth merely because we do not see it – it is exactly the same (even if its manifestations are now invisible to the human eye). Thirdly, it is important not to confuse references to believers being "filled with Spirit" with His universal indwelling. These are two separate things entirely (the former does not always indicate the latter, nor the latter the former; see section II.B.3.b.1 below "Fellowship and the Filling of the Spirit"). The gift of the Holy Spirit, His coming to indwell believers as a permanent presence, is unique to the Church Age, having never happened previously prior to that first Pentecost of the Church. But since, clearly, the Spirit ministered to believers before this time, and since there are some transitional stages between the Old Testament economy of the Spirit being "with you" and the New Testament economy of the Spirit being "in you" (Jn.14:16-17) – universally from salvation on – it will be helpful here to chart that progression:

**a) The Spirit's Ministry before the Cross and Resurrection of Christ:**

(16) I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter to be with you forever – (17) the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, for it neither sees Him, nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He abides with you, and will be in you.

John 14:16-17

As our Lord's words here make clear, the Holy Spirit has always been with believers, carrying out the very same ministries He is now carrying out on behalf of Christ's Church (cf. Ps.139:7; Zech.4:6; with Israel also benefitting from a collective guidance of the Spirit: e.g., Neh.9:20; 9:30; Ps.106:33; Is.63:10-14; Hag.2:5). The main difference, explained by our Lord above, is that while He previously operated "from the outside", He is now on the believer's "inside" – and that is quite a difference indeed. Believers today are, universally, indwelt by the Holy Spirit; in Old Testament times, believers were, universally, aided by the Spirit in doing all the things that believers should do, notably in His empowerment of the process of learning God's truth, without which special ministry no one could be saved and grow spiritually (covered below in section II.B.3.a.3, "Spiritual Growth Epistemology").

In addition to the Spirit's universal ministrations to believers before the first Pentecost of the Church, scripture also records, in varying language, a number of special empowerments wherein the Holy Spirit took up a temporary residence in certain believers for the purpose of energizing special ministries of one type or another, sometimes for administering His people, but most commonly for the purpose of proclaiming the Word of God (i.e., prophecy, from Gk. *pro-phemi*, to speak forth / ahead of time; to prophesy). All true prophecy has always been from God, being the voice of the Spirit in proclaiming the truth (which is all about Jesus Christ):

They made their hearts as hard as flint and would not listen to the law or to the words that the Lord Almighty had sent **by his Spirit through the earlier prophets.**  
Zechariah 7:12a NIV

Joseph:

And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?"  
Genesis 41:38 NKJV

Moses:

(16) So the Lord said to Moses: "Gather to Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them; bring them to the tabernacle of meeting, that they may stand there with you. (17) Then I will come down and talk with you there. **I will take of the Spirit that is upon you** and will put the same upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear it yourself alone."  
Numbers 11:16-17 NKJV

The Elders of the Exodus:

(25) Then the Lord came down in the cloud, and spoke to him, and took of the Spirit that was upon him, and placed the same upon the seventy elders; and it



happened, when the Spirit rested upon them, that they prophesied, although they never did so again.

Numbers 11:25 NKJV

(26) But two men had remained in the camp: the name of one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad. And the Spirit rested upon them. Now they were among those listed, but who had not gone out to the tabernacle; yet they prophesied in the camp. (27) And a young man ran and told Moses, and said, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp." (28) So Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, one of his choice men, answered and said, "Moses my lord, forbid them!" (29) Then Moses said to him, "Are you zealous for my sake? Oh, that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!"

Numbers 11:26-29 NKJV

These passages demonstrate that 1) not everyone had the unction of the Spirit (as is the case today); 2) the degree of the anointing varied (Moses' is so extensive that it is sufficient to be parceled out to the seventy elders without negatively affecting his ministry); 3) it was sometimes accompanied by miraculous signs, in this case (and elsewhere) "prophesying" or speaking forth God's truth at the Spirit's direction; 4) these signs (and this ecstatic condition) did not generally last beyond the inaugural event: the elders "did not do it again" (cf. the uniqueness of the first Pentecost of the Church).

#### Bezalel and other artisans:

"So you shall speak to all who are gifted artisans, whom I have filled with the Spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments, to consecrate him, that he may minister to Me as priest."

Exodus 28:3 NKJV

(1) Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: (2) "See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. (3) And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship."

Exodus 31:1-3 NKJV

(30) And Moses said to the children of Israel, "See, the Lord has called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; (31) and He has filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom and understanding, in knowledge and all manner of workmanship."

Exodus 35:30-31 NKJV

(34) And he has given both him and Oholiab son of Ahisamak, of the tribe of Dan, the ability to teach others. (35) He has filled **them** with skill to do all kinds of work as engravers, designers, embroiderers in blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen, and weavers—all of them skilled workers and designers.

Exodus 35:34-35 NKJV

Joshua:

And the Lord said to Moses: "Take Joshua the son of Nun with you, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him."

Numbers 27:18 NKJV

Now Joshua the son of Nun was full of the Spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; so the children of Israel heeded him, and did as the Lord had commanded Moses.

Deuteronomy 34:9 NKJV

Othniel:

(9) When the children of Israel cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for the children of Israel, who delivered them: Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. (10) The Spirit of the Lord came upon him (*'al*), and he judged Israel.

Judges 3:9-10a NKJV

Gideon:

But the Spirit of the Lord came upon (*labhash*) Gideon; then he blew the trumpet, and the Abiezrites gathered behind him.

Judges 6:34 NKJV

Jephthah:

Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah (*'al*), and he passed through Gilead and Manasseh, and passed through Mizpah of Gilead; and from Mizpah of Gilead he advanced toward the people of Ammon.

Judges 11:29 NKJV

Samson:

And the Spirit of the Lord began to move upon him (*lepa'am*) at Mahaneh Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.

Judges 13:25 NKJV

And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him (*tsalach 'al*), and he tore the lion apart as one would have torn apart a young goat, though he had nothing in his hand. But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done.

Judges 14:6 NKJV

Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon him mightily (*tsalach 'al*), and he went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty of their men, took their apparel, and gave the changes of clothing to those who had explained the riddle. So his anger was aroused, and he went back up to his father's house.

Judges 14:9 NKJV

When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting against him. Then the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him (*tsalach 'al*); and the ropes that were on his arms became like flax that is burned with fire, and his bonds broke loose from his hands.

Judges 15:14 NKJV

#### Saul:

"Then the Spirit of the Lord will come upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man."

1st Samuel 10:6 NKJV

When they came there to the hill, there was a group of prophets to meet him; then the Spirit of God came upon him (*tsalach 'al*), and he prophesied among them

1st Samuel 10:10 NKJV.

Then the Spirit of God came upon Saul (*'al*) when he heard this news, and his anger was greatly aroused.

1st Samuel 11:6 NKJV

But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and a distressing spirit from the Lord troubled him.

1st Samuel 16:14 NKJV

#### David:

(1) Now these are the last words of David. Thus says David the son of Jesse; Thus says the man raised up on high, The anointed of the God of Jacob, And the sweet psalmist of Israel: (2) "The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, And His word was on my tongue."

2nd Samuel 23:1-2 NKJV

#### Elijah and Elisha:

When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?" "Let me inherit a double portion of your Spirit," Elisha replied.

2nd Kings 2:9 NIV

The company of the prophets from Jericho, who were watching, said, "The Spirit of Elijah is resting on Elisha." And they went to meet him and bowed to the ground before him.

2nd Kings 2:15 NIV

#### Amasai:

Then the Spirit came on Amasai, chief of the Thirty, and he said: "We are yours, David! We are with you, son of Jesse! Success, success to you, and success to

those who help you, for your God will help you." So David received them and made them leaders of his raiding bands.  
1st Chronicles 12:18 NIV

#### Azariah:

(1) The Spirit of God came on Azariah son of Oded. (2) He went out to meet Asa and said to him, "Listen to me, Asa and all Judah and Benjamin. The Lord is with you when you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you."  
2nd Chronicles 15:1-2 NIV

#### Jahaziel:

(14) Then the Spirit of the Lord came on Jahaziel son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite and descendant of Asaph, as he stood in the assembly. (15) He said: "Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the Lord says to you: 'Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's' ".  
2nd Chronicles 20:14-15 NIV

#### Zechariah:

(20) Then the Spirit of God came on Zechariah son of Jehoiada the priest. He stood before the people and said, "This is what God says: 'Why do you disobey the Lord's commands? You will not prosper. Because you have forsaken the Lord, he has forsaken you.' " (21) But they plotted against him, and by order of the king they stoned him to death in the courtyard of the Lord's temple.  
2nd Chronicles 24:20-21 NIV

#### Ezekiel:

The hand of the Lord came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones.  
Ezekiel 37:1 NKJV (cf. Ezek.2:2; 3:12; 3:14; 3:24; 8:3; 11:1; 11:5; 11:24; 43:5)

The Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the Lord filled the temple.  
Ezekiel 43:5 NKJV

#### Micah:

But truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, and of justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin.  
Micah 3:8 NKJV

#### Daniel:

(8) But at last Daniel came before me (his name is Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god; in him is the Spirit of the Holy God), and I told the dream before

him, saying: (9) "Beltshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that the Spirit of the Holy God is in you, and no secret troubles you, explain to me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and its interpretation."

Daniel 4:8-9 NKJV

### Simeon:

(25) And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. (26) And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

Luke 2:25-26 NKJV

This last passage demonstrates that the temporary empowerment of the Spirit visible throughout the Old Testament was still operational during the time of our Lord's first advent. The use here of the preposition *epi* (ἐπι) in the Greek text of Luke, is precisely parallel to the use of the Hebrew preposition 'al (ל) in many of the phrasings listed above. The main difference is that most of the Old Testament passages describe the Spirit's arrival, that is, His "coming upon" the person in question, whereas here we are told that the Spirit "was [resting] upon" Simeon, suggesting His continued presence for some time (as was no doubt the case with many of the prophets).

### John the Baptist:

"For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb."

Luke 1:15 NKJV

Seen in the context of all the passages that have gone before, we see that John's empowerment by the Holy Spirit is unique in two respects: 1) in terms of its commencement immediately from the point of birth,<sup>30</sup> and 2) in terms of its intensity, with "filled" indicating a high degree of influence from the Spirit – not different in kind from that of, say, the prophets, but clearly of note.

### The Disciples:

"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

Luke 11:13 NKJV

(21) So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." (22) And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

John 20:21-22 NKJV

The first passage above indicates that the special dispensations of the Spirit recorded in the Old Testament were not (or at least need not have been) the only

ones that took place, inasmuch as the Father was more than willing to "give the Holy Spirit to those who ask[-ed] Him" (Lk.11:13). Given the critical importance for the eleven to stay spiritually safe before the day of Pentecost, in the second passage above we see our Lord providing them with an "unasked for" special unction of the Spirit (of precisely the same sort we find throughout the Old Testament, the difference here consisting in the fact that the Lord Jesus Himself is seen to be providing it directly). This "breathing on of the Spirit" was a temporary unction which would soon be replaced by the even better permanent indwelling of the Spirit (Lk.24:49; Acts 1:4-8). It is for this very reason that our Lord gave very specific instructions to the disciples to the effect that the evangelizing of the nations was not to begin until the advent of the Holy Spirit and their reception of His permanent presence (Lk.24:49).<sup>31</sup> From that point forward the disciples/apostles possessed the very same indwelling of the Spirit's presence we believers enjoy today. For the bulk of their time with our Lord, however, the ministry of the Spirit to the twelve was the same as it had been to all other believers in Old Testament times: "with you", rather than "in you" as we are blessed to experience His ministry today (Jn.14:16-17).

The listings above are not meant to be exhaustive (and there are no doubt many other such instances not recorded in scripture; cf. 1Ki.7:14), but is provided merely to illustrate the profound difference between our present day Church Age indwelling of the Spirit and what occurred before Christ's victory at the cross. The purposes, processes, and effects of the aforementioned Old Testament cases all have in common the temporary (or at least potentially temporary; cf. 1Sam.10:6 and 1Sam.16:14) nature of the Spirit's residence in the believer in question and also the (in general) extraordinary nature of the individuals in question and the roles they were called to play in God's plan of salvation. The temporary and extraordinary nature of these empowerments (expressed in varied terminology in the verses quoted above but referring to the same ministry of the Spirit) stands in stark contrast to the **permanent** and **universal** nature of the gift of the Spirit to all members of Christ's Church.<sup>32</sup>

#### b) **The first or "Jewish" Pentecost:**

(31) "The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. (32) It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them", declares the Lord. (33) "This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time," declares the Lord. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. (34) No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the Lord. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."  
Jeremiah 31:31-34

(24) "For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; (25) I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. (26) I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. (27) And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. (28) Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God."  
Ezekiel 36:24-28 NIV

"I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the people of Israel, declares the Sovereign Lord."  
Ezekiel 39:29 NIV

(28) "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. (29) Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days."  
Joel 2:28-29 NIV

"For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants."  
Isaiah 44:3 NIV

"As for me, this is my covenant with them," says the Lord. "My Spirit, who is on you, will not depart from you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will always be on your lips, on the lips of your children and on the lips of their descendants—from this time on and forever," says the Lord.  
Isaiah 59:21 NIV

These passages are sufficient to show that the coming of the Holy Spirit, the sign of the New Covenant, was originally promised to Israel as God's unique and special people: the Holy Spirit is *the* sign of the New Covenant.<sup>33</sup> The expansion of this blessing to all members of Christ's Church, gentiles along with Jews, was part of the mystery only revealed after our Lord Jesus' great victory at the cross (Rom.11:25-27; Eph.3:1-11; Col.1:27; cf. Lk.24:47; Acts 1:8; 10:45; 11:18; 15:14-17). As such, it was right and proper that the Spirit first be given to the Jewish community of faith – of which the Church militant at that time was almost universally composed in any case. The coming of the Spirit, was, therefore, an event which should have been received by all of Israel at the time as the mark of a complete and radical redefining of their relationship with the Lord (as indicated in the passages quoted immediately above) – as well as a very emphatic underlining by the Father of the truth that Jesus was His Son, the one and only Messiah.<sup>34</sup>

(36) "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." (37) Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles,

"Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (38) Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (39) ***For the promise is to you and to your children***, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."<sup>35</sup>  
Acts 2:36-39 NKJV

As the last part of the last verse above indicates, the expansion of the gospel to the gentiles, and the provision of the Spirit to believers not present at this first, inaugural outpouring of the Spirit (along with other considerations such as the establishment of the authority of the apostles) would necessitate that the gift of the Spirit be "phased in" to some degree during the early days of the Church Age.

c) **Mediation:** In a very short time to come, the Spirit would be universally indwelling all believers – because all believers would be indwelt by Him at the point of faith (certainly this was true by the time Paul wrote Romans 8:9, e.g.). However, because of the manner in which the Spirit came – all of a sudden on the day of Pentecost to an assembled group with overtly miraculous manifestations in order to demonstrate beyond any doubt the fact of His arrival – not all of God's people were immediately blessed with the gift of the Spirit. This fact, and the need to establish the authority of the apostles, led to a situation in the very early days of the Church Age only where the giving of the Spirit was occasionally mediated by the apostles. This phenomenon was very short-lived (by Acts 10:34-46, the Spirit was falling even upon the gentiles at the point of faith in Jesus Christ), but important to discuss here to avoid any confusion between this temporary and transitional state of affairs on the one hand, and what has been happening ever since the early apostolic days for every other Christian in Christ's Church (namely, universal indwelling at the point of faith in Christ: Gal.3:2).

#### Other Jewish Believers at Pentacost:

Then Peter said to them, "Repent [of your unbelief]". He said also (Greek: *phesin kai*), "Let each of you be baptized in the Name of Jesus as a demonstration of the forgiveness of your sins [which comes as a result of this faith/repentance], [so that] then [as a result of your faith/repentance] you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (i.e., through that laying on of hands in the baptism)."  
Acts 2:38

Although there was much about the new age and God's new provisions for this new Age of the Church that Peter at this point did not yet understand, nevertheless he did grasp that the gift of the Spirit which he and the assembled believers had just received was for all the Jews who had rushed to the sound of the Spirit's miraculous coming. The New Covenant and the blessings attending it as exemplified by the pouring out of the Spirit was for all Israel – provided they accepted their Messiah, Jesus Christ – and for all willing to come to Jesus Christ in faith.



"The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call."

Acts 2:29 NIV

Since John was the Messiah's herald, conducting a mass water-baptism at this time (as seems to have taken place; cf. Acts 2:41) was a natural way for Peter and company to be able to tell who in the crowd was genuinely expressing interest. In the process of the baptism with water, the apostles "laid hands" on those who came forward, and that was the means of imparting the Holy Spirit. Today, of course, Holy Spirit baptism is immediate upon faith in Christ, and takes place without any human mediation, just as it would begin to be the case even during the apostles' day:

(44) While Peter was ***still speaking*** these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. (45) The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles.

Acts 10:44-45 NIV

At the time of the first Pentecost, however, demonstrating and establishing the apostles' authority was important, and that principle may be clearly seen in all of the scriptural examples of mediating the gift of the Spirit, especially where as here the subjects in question were not previously believers.

"We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."

Acts 5:32 NIV

### The Samaritans:

(14) Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, (15) who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. (16) For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (*lit.* "into"; Gr. *eis* as at Matt.28:19). (17) Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

Acts 8:14-17 NKJV

In the case of the Samaritans, having as they did a long-established religion which deliberately paralleled Judaism (cf. Jn.4:9;4:20), it was particularly important that the authority of the apostles as those chosen by the Lord to establish His incipient Church be clearly and emphatically demonstrated. Luke tells that these individuals had believed and had received Spirit baptism "into Christ", but had not received the gift of the indwelling of the Spirit. That gift was then mediated by the apostles Peter and John on their arrival from Jerusalem, with the result that these new believers also partook fully of all of the Spirit's blessings, without at the same time being left in any doubt about who was in charge of the new Church.

### Phillip and the Ethiopian:

(26) Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (27) So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means "queen of the Ethiopians"). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, (28) and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. (29) The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it." (30) Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked. (31) "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. (32) This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading: "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. (33) In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth." (34) The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" (35) Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. (36) As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?" (38) And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. (39) When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.

Acts 8:26-39 NIV

The Holy Spirit guides Phillip to the Ethiopian (v.26), directs Phillip to approach him (v.29), and takes him away miraculously once his divinely directed task is complete (v.39). In the process, Phillip water-baptizes the Ethiopian, but the purpose of this act and indeed of the entire encounter is widely misunderstood: the Ethiopian was already a believer – as a good many individuals were before the coming of our dear Lord Jesus Christ. What he lacked was: 1) a proper understanding of who the Messiah was, since he had not been in Jerusalem for the events of recent years and was proceeding from an Old Testament appreciation of what the shadows of the Law meant (and very understandably too); and 2) the gift of the Spirit (since he had not been in Jerusalem for the first Pentecost, either in the room with assembled disciples or in the crowd who accepted Peter's testimony and were likewise water-baptized for the purpose of mediating the Spirit). Thus, the Ethiopian represents that class of godly person who, for various reasons, were not privy to the events that transpired under John's preparatory ministry and our Lord's ministry, crucifixion and resurrection – the "good news" which Phillip immediately shares with him.

The Spirit's gracious and miraculous filling in of what was lacking in this case demonstrates that for all such individuals who were willing to accept that Jesus was indeed the true Messiah and the visible face, so to speak, of fulfillment for all of the Old Testament shadows of salvation, were not to be left out nor deprived of

the gift of the Spirit – provided they did not harden their hearts once Jesus was revealed to them as the one and only Son of God (as, sadly, many in Jerusalem did).

### Saul's Conversion:

(3) As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. (4) Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" (5) And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads." (6) So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

Acts 9:3-6 NKJV

Any Christian reading this passage and putting themselves into this situation can have very little doubt about the fact that Paul, confronted with the glory of Jesus Christ as he was and addressed by Him personally in this way became a believer immediately at this point (cf. Acts 22:6-10; 26:13-20). Everything about the call of the twelfth apostle was unique, and that included also Paul's reception of the Holy Spirit at water-baptism mediated by Ananias, who, although an exceptional believer, was not an apostle – but he was given very precise orders by our Lord Jesus Himself to carry out this procedure (cf. Acts 9:10-16; 22:12-16).<sup>36</sup>

(17) And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." (18) Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized (i.e., the point of Paul's reception of the gift of the Spirit).

Acts 9:17-18 NKJV

### Timothy:

... when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.

2nd Timothy 1:5 NKJV

... and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

2nd Timothy 3:15 NKJV

Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.

1st Timothy 4:14 NKJV

Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.  
2nd Timothy 1:6 NKJV

The passages above, considered together, clearly demonstrate that when Paul first took Timothy under his care (Acts 16:1-3), 1) he had been a believer since his youth through the evangelizing efforts of his mother and grandmother, but that 2) since he had become a believer outside of the ambit of Jerusalem and the events of the gospel and before the Spirit was given universally to all at the point of faith in Christ, he had not yet received the gift of the Spirit and required an apostolic "laying on of hands" to receive Him and also to receive the gift ordained for him, namely, that of pastor/teacher. Timothy's situation and experience thus parallels that of the Samaritans, the Ethiopian, Paul, and the Ephesian brethren, being along with them part of a group who required the mediation of the Spirit during this transitional apostolic era of the Church.

#### The Ephesian Brethren:

(5) When they heard [Paul's explanation of the gospel in Acts 19:4] they were [immediately] baptized [by the Spirit] into the Person of the Lord Jesus, (6) for when Paul placed his hands upon them [to mediate the Spirit], the Holy Spirit came upon them and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying.  
Acts 19:5-6

Here we have no water-baptism at all (as is often wrongly supposed), but a direct mediation of the Spirit by the apostle Paul on behalf of a group of believers who had put their faith in the coming Messiah through John's ministry of anticipation, but had not been present to see the Lord personally or to receive the Spirit at Pentecost.

In all of the above cases, we see that the mediation of the Spirit through the laying on of the apostles hands is either necessitated by the fact that the person or persons in question were already believers before Pentecost, or on account of a deliberate (and temporary) "split" between belief and the granting of the gift with the aim of establishing the authority of the apostles in the very early day of the Church – and in some cases both. In relatively short order, with the passage of time, the number of those still alive who were indeed believers but had not received the gift (either directly or through apostolic mediation) eventually diminished and disappeared, so that by the time of the writing of the book of Romans, Paul can say with confidence, "if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, that person does not belong to Him" (Rom.8:9).

I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you **receive the Spirit** by the works of the law, or **by believing** what you heard?  
Galatians 3:2 NIV

(5) – Not on account of [any] works which we had done in [so-called] righteousness did He save us, but [He saved us] through the washing [away of

our sins which leads to our] rebirth and [to our] new beginning from the Holy Spirit, (6) whom He **poured out** upon us bountifully through Jesus Christ our Savior.

Titus 3:5-6

The early part of the era of the apostles documented in the book of Acts describes for us the nature of the transitional period between the Age of Israel and the Age of the Church, between the phasing out of the Law as the standard of faith and practice and its replacement with the New Covenant and the new divine economy of grace it details. Grasping the importance of this transformation, something often still imperfectly understood in our day, is of critical importance in understanding the doctrines of the New Testament and fundamental difference of approach under which Christians operate spiritually (or certainly should). This point is also made powerfully by the apostle Paul in the book of Hebrews.

Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

Hebrews 6:1-2 NKJV

"Baptisms", that is, the important distinction between the Jewish-centered water-baptism of John versus the all-inclusive baptism of the Spirit, and "laying on hands", that is, the temporary mediation of the Spirit for those who required it before the gift of the Spirit became universal at the point of faith in Christ, are termed "elementary principles", part of the "foundation" or initial knowledge that is to be learned shortly after salvation before going on to "things which lead to perfection" (i.e., spiritual growth, maturity, progress and production). The truth of this characterization is glaringly obvious in our own day. After all, few things have contributed to spiritual torpor and denominational infighting over trivialities than the insistence of continuing with water-baptism and the laying on of hands out of a complete misunderstanding of what these rituals really meant and what their true purpose really was.

#### d) **The so-called Gentile Pentecost:**

(44) While Peter was **still speaking** these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. (45) The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles.

Acts 10:44-45 NIV

The Holy Spirit went to great lengths to prepare Peter for his meeting with Cornelius and his family, demonstrating through an unprecedented repetition of a waking vision that the gentiles were now going to be flooding into Christ's Church and should therefore not be avoided or despised simply because they were not of Jewish blood. The Spirit's emphatic punctuation of this seminal event in the history of the Church, falling upon the assembled gentiles who had

believed in Christ as soon as Peter presented the gospel message, marked the end of the period of apostolic mediation (except, as noted, for cases of prior believers who did not yet have the Spirit), and the beginning of the automatic reception of the gift of the Spirit at salvation by all who would believe.<sup>37</sup>

And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, that person does not belong to Him.

Romans 8:9b (cf. Gal.3:2-5; 3:14; 4:6)

### 3. The Post-Salvation Ministries of the Spirit:

Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.  
1st Corinthians 12:3 NKJV

Nothing good, nor righteous, nor godly, nor in keeping with the Plan of God or the Will of God is ever done or can be done apart from the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It is in that sense primarily that the word "spiritual" ought to be understood by Christians today, both in the Bible and in our employment of that word in our conversation. Anything truly "spiritual" is empowered by the Holy Spirit. And without the Spirit's empowerment, nothing can be done by any Christian in furtherance of God's will for their lives and in their response to the call for spiritual growth, advance and production our Lord Jesus has placed upon all who belong to Him.

You also, like living stones, are being built into a **spiritual** house to be a holy priesthood, offering **spiritual** sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.  
1st Peter 2:5 NIV

The divine construction of this "spiritual temple" into which we the Church are being built by the power of the Spirit is going on largely unseen by human eyes. Just as the Spirit is invisible, yet powerfully felt, so also all spiritual effects, while incredibly powerful and life-changing, are not evident to natural perception. The Bible thus uses the word "spiritual" to refer to the unseen divine element at work in everything God is accomplishing through believers, believers, that is, who are willing to respond to the Holy Spirit so as to be led and directed by Him. This sort of "spirituality", true, godly, biblical "spirituality", is thus usually not at all what the world generally thinks of when the word is used. "Spirituality", in biblical terms means the state of empowerment and direction by the Holy Spirit. As such, true spirituality is an absolute. Either a person is controlled by the Spirit or he/she is not. Either something is taking place through the agency of the Spirit or it is not. And in terms of our present topic, the empowerment and direction of the Christian walk after salvation, everything that has been provided for us to grow and follow Christ comes from the Spirit, and without the Spirit there is no possibility of doing so. His role is absolutely critical in every aspect and every phase of the Christian walk.

"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit" says the Lord of Hosts.  
Zechariah 4:6

The Spirit provides, and the Spirit empowers. And we all have the Spirit indwelling us. This combination of factors is primarily what makes the present Church Age so wonderfully filled with potential for personal spiritual growth, progress in the Lord, and production to benefit the Church of Jesus Christ. Whether it is input (what we are provided with as Christians) or output (what we do in response as Christians), in all things spiritual, the Spirit is the key.

a. Spiritual Growth Infrastructure:

The process of spiritual growth per se is a subject which properly belongs to our next installment of this series: Part 6A: Peripateology: the Study of the Christian Walk. Our purpose here will be to examine the infrastructure for that growth which the Holy Spirit has provided. After all, the edification of the Church, that is, the building up of as many believers as are willing to spiritual maturity and beyond, is a primary purpose of the Spirit's indwelling ministry, and this could not be properly accomplished without certain fundamental provisions, specifically, 1) the completed Bible; 2) prepared men to teach it (along with all ancillary needs); and 3) the Spirit's own teaching ministry (without which no principle of divine truth could be understood).

(18) For it is through Him that we both have our access to the Father by means of one Spirit. (19) So then, you are no longer strangers and hangers-on, but you are fellow citizens and fellow members of the household of God, (20) established upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Himself the cornerstone, (21) in whom the entire structure is in the process of being joined together and is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, (22) in whom you too are being **built up** into a dwelling place of God **by the Spirit**.  
Ephesians 2:18-22 (cf. 1Cor.6:19; Eph.4:16)

(14) For this reason I bow my knees to the Father, (15) from whom His entire family in heaven and on earth has received its name, (16) that He may grant you according to the riches of His glory to be powerfully **strengthened in your inner person through His Spirit**, (17) so that, rooted and grounded in love, Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.  
Ephesians 3:14-17

(4) [It is Jesus] to whom you have come, a Living Stone, rejected by men, but with God elect and highly honored. (5) And you yourselves are being built up (i.e., by the Holy Spirit) into a **spiritual** house to be a **holy** priesthood for the offering of **spiritual** sacrifices well-pleasing to God through Jesus Christ.  
1st Peter 2:4-5

(1) The Bible:

Part 7 of this series, Bibliology: "the Study of the Bible", will provide the details about the place of the Bible in the plan of God generally, its revelation, nature, perfection, inspiration, and interpretation as the source of God's truth, His Word revealed to mankind. In this section of our present study we are concerned with the Holy Spirit's provision of the scriptures as an essential building block for the spiritual growth of the Church (e.g., 2Sam.23:2; Neh.9:30; Zech.7:12; Matt.22:43; Mk.12:36; Acts 4:25; 1Tim.4:1; Heb.3:7; 9:8; 10:15; Rev.2:10; 2:11; 2:17; 2:29; 3:6; 3:13; 3:32; 17:13; 22:17). The Bible is the Word of God, and without it there would be no possibility of spiritual growth beyond a certain basic level, not, that is, without some other provision of the truth, as in direct prophecy, for example. Since the days of the apostolic period and the close of the canon of scripture, there have been no prophets and no divinely inspired revelation apart from what had already been recorded in the Bible.

It has seemed strange to some that in this age, the Church Age, the time of the Holy Spirit's universal indwelling of all believers, such overtly miraculous gifts should cease in preference to the written Word. In point of fact, however, this is no contradiction at all, but a very necessary development. The Spirit's mission is the edification of the Church through the Church's own "building up of itself in love" (Eph.4:16; cf. Col.2:19). Rather than a top-down delivery of the truth directly from God Himself as was the case in Israel (as with the reception by Moses of the Law and its dissemination directly thereafter to the people), the Church is frequently described as the "Body of Christ" of which our Lord Jesus is "the Head" (e.g., 1Cor.11:3; 12:12ff.; Eph.1:22-23; 4:15-16; 5:22-33; Col.1:18; 2:10; 2:19). Just as no body part can say to another "I have no need of you" (1Cor.12:21), so it is with Christ's Church. Making the Bible the sole repository of God's truth (outside, of course, of natural revelation), has had the effect of increasing our collective dependence on the Holy Spirit for our mutual spiritual edification. That is because without the gifts of the Spirit (point #2 below), and without the indwelling Spirit's ministry which establishes the truth in our hearts when we hear and believe it (point #3 below), the incomparable blessing of now possessing the entire, complete revelation of the Word of God would be of little benefit to us.

(14) How can they call upon someone they have not believed in? And how can they believe in what they have not heard about? And how can they hear without someone proclaiming [the truth]? (15) And how can they proclaim the truth unless they are sent? As it has been written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who give the good news!" (16) But not all obeyed that good news. As Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our tidings?" (17) So then, faith comes from hearing, and hearing comes through the Word of Christ.

Romans 10:14-17

Applying Paul's critique of unbelieving Israel to the Church, it is clear that without the entire system of support which the Spirit has designed, there can be no spiritual growth: to profit from the Word, the Word must be heard; to be heard, it must be proclaimed, to be proclaimed, those who do so must be



sent/supported. Herein we see the entire system of Holy Spirit provided edification in broad-brush terms. The truth contained in the Bible is the Word that all must hear – in order to be saved yes, but also in terms of the Church itself in order to grow. That truth must be spoken forth and interpreted correct in the hearing of receptive believers for spiritual edification to take place, which in turn requires the ministry of prepared men, pastor/teachers (and evangelists for the unsaved), who in turn must be supported (materially, spiritually, and administratively) by the entire Church for the process to work. This interdependent system, whereby those who proclaim the Word and those who hear it are absolutely dependent one on another (as each body part is on every other body part), and wherein the unifying focal point of those who teach and those who hear is the Bible, common to all and available to all, has served to make Spirit's role more critical than ever before, and explains in large measure why the system of growth God has provided today would not have worked in the past: for the proper functioning of the Church, the gift of the Spirit is absolutely essential, since He is the one who gives the gifts (point #2 below) and empowers the process (point #3 below). The third element, the completed canon of scripture, is also of course very much a work of the Spirit:

(16) For I did not follow concocted tales in making known to you the power and the coming return of our Lord, Jesus Christ, but was an eyewitness to His majesty. (17) For when He had received honor and glory from God the Father, these words sounded forth to Him from God's majestic glory: "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased." (18) And these words I myself heard as they were delivered from heaven, for I was with Him on the holy mountain (cf. Matt.17:1-8). (19) Yet I consider the prophetically inspired Word (i.e. the Bible) even more reliable (i.e., than what I saw with my own eyes). You too would do well to pay the closest attention to this [prophetically inspired Word], just as to a lamp shining in a dark place (cf. Ps.119:105), until the day dawns, and the Morning Star rises (i.e. the Living Word, Jesus Christ, returns), (20) pondering in your hearts this principle of prime importance: no single verse of prophetically inspired scripture has ever come into being as a result of personal reflection. (21) For true prophecy has never occurred by human will, but only when holy men of God have spoken under the direction and agency of the Holy Spirit.  
2nd Peter 1:16-21

Scripture, therefore, is the primary provision of the Spirit for the task of the Church's edification. That is the treasure He gives which we are meant to mine (point #2 below), and it is the source of all truth for the Church which His ministry illuminates when the Word is heard (point #3 below).

And [in this spiritual warfare] put on the helmet of salvation and gird on the sword of the Spirit – which is the Word of truth.  
Ephesians 6:17 (cf. Heb.4:12)

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.  
Revelation 2:7a

## (2) Spiritual Gifts Supporting Bible Teaching:

All spiritual gifts are given to believers by the Holy Spirit (1Cor.12:4-11), and the types and functions of the various gifts, both currently active and not presently being given, are discussed below (in section II.B.3.d.1: "Spiritual Gifts"). We are concerned here to demonstrate that the **overall** purpose of all of the gifts given to believers in the Church Age is the reception of God's truth for the purpose of salvation, spiritual growth, spiritual progress, and spiritual production in the case of every believer in a blessed divine "feed-back loop" wherein the Body of Christ ministers to itself individually and collectively, one part to another, until "we all reach that unifying goal of believing what is right and of giving our complete allegiance to the Son of God" (Eph.4:13; cf. Eph.2:18-22):

(11) Christ Himself appointed some of us apostles, some prophets, some **evangelists**, some **pastors and teachers** (12) in order **to prepare** all of His holy people for their own ministry work, that the entire body of Christ might thus be **built up**, (13) until we all reach that unifying [goal] of belief in and full-knowledge (*epignosis*) of the Son of God, that each of us might be a perfect person, that is, that we might attain to that standard of maturity whose "attainment" is defined by Christ; (14) that we may no longer be immature, swept off-course and carried headlong by every breeze of so-called teaching that emanates from the trickery of men in their readiness to do anything to cunningly work their deceit, (15) but rather that we may, by embracing the truth in love, **grow up** in all respects with Christ, who is the head of the Church, as our model. (16) In this way, the entire body of the Church, fit and joined together by Him through the sinews He powerfully supplies to each and every part, works out its own growth for the **building up** of itself in love.

Ephesians 4:11-16

True Christian unity here on earth before the resurrection would be, in its ideal sense, a church-visible wherein every part of the Body responded to the leading of the Spirit, grew to the point of the proper functioning of its individual gifts, and supported the process of collective growth through contributing to the availability and reception of the truth of the Word of God, whether doing so directly or indirectly (again, depending upon the type of gift and ministry assigned).

For it is from this Source (i.e., Jesus Christ) that the entire body [the Church] is [truly] supplied and instructed through [all] its joints and sinews, and [thus] produces the growth that God has given.

Colossians 2:19

The "joints and sinews" of the Church are its various "body parts", to which general category we who believe in Christ all belong (e.g., 1Cor.12:12-31). And while it is true that the "greater gifts" in that context (1Cor.12:31) are those directly concerned with supplying the Body with the spiritual food it requires to function properly, and that for this reason believers with such gifts and employing them honorably and effectively should be obeyed, respected and

considered worthy of "double honor" (1Tim.5:17), it is nevertheless true that all spiritual gifts have the same basic purpose: to support the hearing, teaching and applying of the truth of the Word of God.

For example, a place for the local church to meet, the means to support a pastor/teacher, and the carrying out of necessary administrative functions in any such group will require gifts of hospitality, giving and administration respectively – and of the variety and combination of these and many other gifts in an equally wide variation of different ministries there is virtually no end (and this is true despite the traditional church-visible's penchant for reducing the "multifaceted grace of God" to what amounts to cookie-cutter style replicas of one another: 1Pet.4:10). The Spirit's supplying of spiritual gifts to the Church is thus the lynchpin connecting the Bible and His own teaching ministry, because these gifts – teaching gifts supported and amplified by all other gifts – expound the truth of the Word which the Spirit then makes perceptible to all willing to hear and believe (point #3 immediately below).

### (3) Spiritual Growth Epistemology:

"But he who believes in Me as the scriptures have told [him to do], rivers of living water will flow out from within him (i.e., the water of the Word believed through and empowered by the Spirit)."

John 7:38

(9) But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."

(10) But God has revealed them to us ***through His Spirit***. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. (11) For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.

1st Corinthians 2:9-11 NKJV

And [in this spiritual warfare] put on the helmet of salvation and gird on ***the sword of the Spirit*** – which is the Word of truth.

Ephesians 6:17

We will discuss below (section II.B.3.b.2), in our treatment of the Spirit's teaching ministry, the mechanics of the divinely provided means for believers ***individually*** to understand and therefore to assimilate God's (holy) truth, even though we still inhabit imperfect, sinful bodies. What the verses above make clear (and cf. Jn.14:17; 15:26; 16:12-15; 1Jn.4:6; 5:6), is that the Spirit Himself has always been the necessary communications link between God and sinful mankind, and, in particular, it is He who provides in the case of the Church the means by which this learning process may take place – for all believers who choose to expose themselves to the teaching of the truth and are willing to believe that truth once made perceptible to them by the Spirit.

(11) Christ Himself appointed some of us apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers (12) in order to prepare all of His holy people for their own ministry work, that the entire body of Christ might thus be built up, (13) until we all reach that unifying [goal] of belief in and full-knowledge (*epignosis*) of the Son of God, that each of us might be a perfect person, that is, that we might attain to that standard of maturity whose "attainment" is defined by Christ; (14) that we may no longer be immature, swept off-course and carried headlong by every breeze of so-called teaching that emanates from the trickery of men in their readiness to do anything to cunningly work their deceit, (15) but rather that we may, **by embracing the truth** in love, grow up in all respects with Christ, who is the head of the Church, as our model. (16) In this way, the entire body of the Church, fit and joined together by Him through the sinews He powerfully supplies to each and every part, works out its own growth for the building up of itself in love.

Ephesians 4:11-16 (cf. Col.2:19)

For God's plan for the Church of Jesus Christ revolves entirely around the truth of Him who is the Truth, the Word of God, our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. For that plan to function properly, therefore, we find the Spirit providing all of the essentials for the Church's edification: 1) the source of the truth (the completed Bible); 2) the means of exploiting that truth (the spiritual gifts of the Body); and 3) the necessary supernatural bridge between pure, holy truth and the willing spirits of those in Christ's Church – the Holy Spirit Himself, indwelling each one of us and acting as our "Teacher", the One who explains the truth we hear and allows us to accept it and make it our own, should we be willing to do so.

(14) For this reason I bow my knees to the Father, (15) from whom His entire family in heaven and on earth has received its name, (16) that He may grant you according to the riches of His glory to be powerfully strengthened in your inner person **through His Spirit**, (17) so that, rooted and grounded in love, Christ may dwell in your hearts **through faith**, (18) so that you may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height [of His love for you], (19) [that is], so that you may know the love of Christ which outstrips [human] understanding [in every way], and so that you may be filled up [to the brim] with the entire "fullness" of God.

Ephesians 3:14-19

It should be noted here in passing that, although all of the pieces are in place for the perfect growth of the Church, collectively and in terms of each individual member, our willingness to hear the truth of scripture, to expose ourselves to ministries that are actually teaching it, and to accept that truth when the Spirit makes it real and discernible to us, is by no means automatic – and in our Laodicean era is in fact sadly far too uncommon.<sup>38</sup>

(14) And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: "This is what the Amen says, the reliable and truthful Witness, the origin of God's creation. (15) I know your works, that they are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot!

(16) As it is, because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I am about to vomit you out of my mouth."

Revelation 3:14-16

b. Empowerment of the Believer:

"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit" says the Lord of Hosts.

Zechariah 4:6

This verse is true of every aspect of the Christian life. The Holy Spirit is the One who, on Christ's behalf, "keeps on pouring the power into" us (Phil.4:13), so that we may be able to endure whatever trials come our way, and so that we may be able to persevere in all that the Lord wants us to do. Every godly "offensive" action the believer takes in spiritual growth, progress and production, and every godly "defensive" action in pursuit of sanctification, is only possible because of the Spirit's empowerment – for nothing done on this earth outside of the power of the Spirit is godly at all. If we are doing good and proper things God's way, we are empowered by the Spirit in so doing; if we are refraining from doing bad and improper things out of respect for God's way, we are empowered by the Spirit in that restraint. It is critical to understand right from the start of this section, however, that the Spirit does not generally **force** a believer to act correctly, nor does the Spirit usually **prevent** believers from acting incorrectly. Instead, it is the Spirit's way to work together with us when we are willing to hear His still, small voice and follow the truth: He empowers, but we have to be willing to be empowered.

(1) Fellowship and the Filling of the Spirit (Responding to the Spirit):

And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.

Ephesians 5:18 KJV

To be effective in the Christian life, believers are absolutely dependent upon the ministry of the Holy Spirit. In the verse above, it is clear to see that just as wine influences a person, and the more so the more the wine taken in, so also the Spirit's influence is something which should be and which needs to be "imbibed" by the believer. As we have seen already, every believer automatically enjoys the indwelling of the Spirit throughout our Christian lives. So the question is, how do we maximize His influence in our lives? How are we "filled", to use the King James' translation of Paul's words above?

The analogy Paul draws between the (often negative) influence of wine and the (supremely positive) influence of the Spirit is very helpful in this regard – as long as we keep in mind that these are opposites, not parallels: we should endeavor to be influenced by the Spirit as much as possible (positive command in the Greek); we should endeavor not to be overly influenced by wine or anything else which may produce negative spiritual results (negative command in the Greek). The absolute state of having imbibed no wine whatsoever is illustrative of the (opposite) absolute state of being completely **indwelt** by the Spirit: all believers

in Jesus Christ possess the indwelling of the Spirit in an absolute way (there is no such thing as a "partial indwelling").<sup>39</sup> However, just as the amount of wine consumed and the influence wine has over a person are variable things (moving from benign to catastrophically bad depending on that amount), analogously the influence of the Spirit over a believer also varies, and it is for the maximizing of this influence for all believers that Paul pleads above: "be filled with the Spirit!" (KJV)

The verb in the Greek used here (*pleroo*, πληρώω), however, is not the more common one to denote "filling". Instead, it more often means "to bring to fulfillment" (viz., it is the standard verb used for the fulfillment of prophecies as in Matt.12:17, etc.).<sup>40</sup> Given that the word "Spirit" in Ephesians 5:18 above is introduced with the preposition *en* (ἐν) instead of a simple genitive (that is, the word for "the means by which" something is done instead of the usual case for expressing the idea of "full of"), we should understand that Paul is not limiting this command to "filling" but is also envisioning "ful-filling" as part of the influence of the Spirit he is commending and commanding in this verse: the Spirit is the influence we are to allow in (so as to be "full of"), but the Spirit is also the means to maximizing that influence (so as to be "fulfilled by").

In truth, these two aspects of the Spirit's empowerment of the believers whom He indwells work hand-in-glove, and so much so that scripture does not generally make this distinction but instead understandably combines the two into the unified idea of "spirituality" (i.e., being "spiritual" means being under the Spirit's influence not merely occasionally but consistently enough to grow and produce: e.g., 1Cor.3:1; 14:37; Gal.6:1). The filling of the Spirit relates to the level of the Spirit's influence over the believer in question at a given moment (i.e., "the filling of the Spirit" is synchronic), whereas the Spirit's leading of the believer to spiritual fulfillment requires that he or she respond properly to this influence of the Spirit over time, being consistently "spiritual" (i.e., "the fulfillment by the Spirit" is diachronic).

Just as a person may be drunk today but sober tomorrow (bad followed by good), so a Christian may be under the influence of the Spirit to a great degree today but very little so tomorrow (good followed by bad). On the other hand, imbibing a great deal of wine on a regular basis will have negative consequences over time (repeated bad leading to worse and worse), whereas a believer who consistently allows him/herself to be influenced by the Spirit to a great degree and consistently responds to that influence will go from strength to strength in the process of growth, progress and production to which we have all been called (repeated good leading to better and better). It is also true that a minimal level of wine may be drunk (e.g., for antiseptic purposes in the ancient world; cf. 1Tim.5:23) without a person being much influenced at all by imbibing (neutral good), whereas it is also sadly all too possible for a believer to be very little influenced by the Spirit (neutral bad), with these respective conditions being possible both at any given time and also over the long run: little imbibing leading

to few problems down the road in the case of wine; little filling leading to little fulfillment of the Lord's purposes for the believer in his/her life in the case of the Spirit. And, finally, it is also possible for a person to be in a condition of absolutely no influence from wine (since he/she is not drinking at all), and analogously possible for a believer to be in the decidedly negative state of being absolutely unable to enjoy the Spirit's influence for positive results on account of a variety of negative reasons discussed under point (c) below, all of which have to do with resisting God's will, that is, all of which have to do with sin.

To paraphrase Paul's message in the Spirit to us on these point, every believer should make it their objective to be under the Spirit's influence to the greatest possible degree **at all times**, both to walk the way Jesus would have us walk step by step today, and also to proceed along the course of spiritual growth, progress and production to greatest possible degree over time.

And don't get drunk with wine – which is dissipating – but instead keep on being full-filled (i.e., making progress in spiritual growth) by means of the Holy Spirit (i.e., the means to edification in contrast to dissipation).

Ephesians 5:18

(a) The Filling of the Spirit:

And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

Acts 9:17 NKJV

(9) Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him (10) and said, "O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord?"

Acts 13:9-10 NKJV

And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

Acts 13:52 NKJV

These three passages between them run the gamut of New Testament usage and meaning in terms of "the filling of the Holy Spirit", so that by considering them carefully we will be able to see what this wording means (and what it does not). In the first passage above, Ananias comes to Paul with the clear understanding that the new twelfth apostle has both a physical problem (blindness) and a spiritual need (to receive the Holy Spirit), both of which Ananias has been commissioned by the Lord to relieve through the laying on of his hands. Not only is Paul's blindness taken away by this act, but he is also at this point given the Holy Spirit – in the same way that, as we have seen above, other believers in Christ during this early period had the gift of the Spirit mediated to them (usually by the apostles). Paul had believed upon hearing the gospel message from Christ

Himself (e.g., Acts 26:19), but had not immediately been given the Spirit (or cured of his blindness), so that Ananias' mediation of the gift of the Spirit was necessary.

What is important to note here is the way in which Ananias phrases this: "that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit". For Ananias, we may conclude, being given the gift of the indwelling Spirit is (nearly) one and the same thing as being filled with the Spirit – and rightly so. The believers who received the gift of the Spirit at the first Pentecost were, in addition to being indwelt, "filled with the Spirit" in the sense of being given visible manifestations of His presence (Acts 2:4), and all who put their faith in Jesus Christ today are immediately reborn, cleansed, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit – leading to a life of His growing influence or "filling". For such an exceptional believer like Paul, we may safely assume that the Spirit's influence over him rarely waned, because he was exceptionally responsive to the prompting of the Spirit. For the rest of us, the challenge of responding to the Spirit's influence fully is also a day by day, moment by moment fight against the flesh (Gal.5:16-25), and we too are guided, influenced, or "filled" by the Spirit when we submit our will to His Will. What we see clearly from this first passage is that the primary **purpose** of the Spirit's indwelling is our acceptance of His leadership, that is, precisely so that we may be "filled with the Spirit" in this way of being influenced by Him to the maximum degree.

The second passage above, also discussing the apostle Paul, introduces another use of the terms "full of " and "filled with the Spirit", namely, those instances scripture records where the Spirit takes a more active role in the behavior of a believer. This "supercharging" of a believer's actions usually involves the proclamation or recording of the Word of God, and in the incident above (Acts 13:9-10), we see the Spirit specially empowering Paul to remove an impediment to the preaching of the gospel. Such instances of "over and above filling" (Paul was certainly responding to the Spirit before this point, so as to be "full" before being "filled [superabundantly] here) are 1) not common in scripture (the other instances being Acts 4:8; 4:31; 7:55), 2) not mentioned at all after this point in the book of Acts; 3) restricted to exceptional believers in the exceptional circumstances of the early days of the Church giving the gospel under very trying circumstances (Paul here, Peter and the early believers refusing to be intimidated from giving the gospel, and Stephen just before being stoned on seeing the heavens open). A fair conclusion to draw from these observations is that the rest of us, who are not as exceptional as these great believers of the past, who do not live in those pre-canon days of necessarily overt and obvious miraculous signs, and who are not proclaiming God's truth at imminent peril to our lives, should not expect the Holy Spirit to "take charge" of us in this special way. For believers today, the norm will be what it was also for the vast majority of the time even for these great believers, namely, responding to the Spirit's guidance as the measure of filling and means of being full of the Spirit. It is true, however, that it days soon



to come there will be parallel circumstances for some who likewise find themselves on trial for their lives for the sake of the Word of God:

(17) Beware of [all] men. For they will betray you into [the hands of their] tribunals and will scourge you in their assemblies. (18) And you will be haled before governors and kings for my sake as a witness to them (i.e., the pseudo-Christian leaders) and to the gentiles (i.e., generic unbelievers). (19) But when they betray you, do not worry how you will speak or what you will say. For it will be given to you in that [very] hour what you will say. (20) For you will not be the ones speaking, but your Father's [Holy] Spirit will be the One speaking in you.  
Matthew 10:17-20

(9) Take care for yourselves. For they will betray you into [the hands of their] tribunals and you will be beaten in their assemblies. And you will stand before governors and kings for my sake as a witness to them. (10) For the gospel must first (i.e., before "the end"; cf. Matt.24:14) be proclaimed to all the nations. (11) And when they betray and hale you [in before them], do not worry about what you will say, but whatever is given to you in that [very] hour, say that. For you are not the ones speaking but the Holy Spirit.  
Mark 13:9-11

(11) And when they bring you into their assemblies and rulers and authorities, do not worry how or what defense you shall make or what you shall say. (12) For the Holy Spirit will instruct you in that very hour [as to] the things which must be said.  
Luke 12:11-12

(12) But, [what is] even more [grievous] than these things (i.e., the events of vv.8-11), they will lay hands upon them, betraying them into [the hands of] their [religious] assemblies and prisons, haling them before kings and governors for the sake of my Name. (13) For this will result for you in an act of witnessing [for Me]. (14) So set it [firmly] in you hearts not to prepare ahead of time to make a defense. (15) For I will give you a mouth and wisdom which none of your enemies will be able to oppose or refute.  
Luke 21:12-15

The third passage quoted in the introduction to this section (Acts 13:52: "And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit") gives us the norm: "filling / filled / full" of/with the Spirit means "characterized by the Spirit's influence":

(28) Now when they heard this, they were **full of wrath** and cried out, saying, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" (29) So the whole city was **filled with confusion**, and rushed into the theater with one accord, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul's travel companions.  
Acts 19:28-29

The two phrases in the passage above are exact parallels of the New Testament regarding the filling of the Spirit (with "full of" being the Greek adjective *pleres*

followed by the genitive case, and "filled with" being the passive of the Greek verb *pimplemi*, also followed by the genitive case). In both cases, the meaning clearly is that of "being under the influence of" and/or significantly characterized by the motive in question (wrath and confusion respectively here). The extent of the influence thus varies, and is sometimes mentioned in scripture to express a constant state (as in Stephen's spirituality: Acts 6:5; contrast with Elymas: "full of deceit and fraud" in Acts 13:10); sometimes to express entrance into a state (as with Saul: 1Sam.10:10; 18:10; contrast with the city entering into a state of confusion in Acts 19:29); sometimes to express a heightened state of influence, one greater or at least more noticeable than the norm (as in Acts 13:9 with respect to Paul and the Spirit motivating him; contrast the rising anger of the Ephesian craftsman: Acts 19:28). What this means for us and the Spirit's ministry is that it is, on the one hand, absolute (we are all indwelt by the Holy Spirit), but that this does not mean that the Spirit's actual influence on our lives is always the same – that is because the extent of His influence depends upon our responsiveness to Him, both synchronically (i.e., where we are at in our spiritual lives "at this moment") and diachronically (i.e., the level of spiritual maturity we have achieved through spiritual growth over time).

When scripture describes Stephen as "a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit", it means that he was characterized by a life given over to the Spirit's influence. Naturally, that level is not the same for every Christian – and every Christian will either be further along the road every day (or will have slipped back). When, on the other hand, scripture describes Paul as being "filled with the Holy Spirit" so that he "looked intently at [Elymas] (who was trying to turn Sergius Paulus away from the truth", it means that Paul, a man who was walking in the Spirit day by day, and was therefore certainly characterized generally by being filled or influenced by the Spirit, was given a special "boost" by the Spirit so that his words and actions *at this moment* were particularly and obviously characterized by the Spirit's influence.

The lesson for every believer is that we should strive to be "filled" with the Spirit's influence at all times (day by day), and should also make ourselves more open to that influence by growing spiritually over time (day after day). In so doing, we will then be available for the Spirit's use for any and all actions that require the sort of immediate filling that Paul, on this occasion, and that Stephen too, on an earlier occasion (Acts 7:55; cf. Acts 6:10) displayed in the service of the Lord. We Christians are all indwelt by the Spirit. We all should strive through consistent spiritual growth to be as open to the Spirit's influence as possible through our learning and believing of the truth – and our readiness to apply it to our lives, following the Spirit's guidance. If we do these things, we may be sure that the Spirit will make whatever use of us in the furtherance of the Plan of God He has determined to make, including any special empowerment or "filling" of the nature described above, when necessary to carry out the will of God.

And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.  
Ephesians 5:18 KJV

We have discussed above the details of the exegesis of this passage, but what the immediately preceding discussion should by now have made clear is that this "filling" is neither automatic nor total: it requires responsiveness to the Spirit both at the moment (being obedient to His step by step guidance) and over time (growing spiritually so as to be more useful to Him day by day). Just as wine can influence us "now" in a bad way, and can, over time when indulged in to excess, worsen our health generally, so we can be empowered by the Spirit "now", the more we are willing to respond to Him, and can over time be more useful to the Lord through Him as we grow in the truth that He teaches us. Being "filled with the Spirit" is, therefore, not magical, nor is it within our power to effect without any effort. To be filled with the Spirit is to be influenced by the Spirit, and that requires our will responding to His WILL both in the immediate and long term. To fully fulfill Paul's command in Ephesians 5:18, we need to respond to the Spirit "today", having made ourselves well-able to do so through the godly preparation of many "yesterdays".

***What is the filling of the Spirit?***

It is the believer being effectively influenced by the Holy Spirit who indwells him/her.

***How do we believers fulfill the command to be filled with the Spirit?***

In two ways:

- 1) By growing spiritually so as to be as to be more useful to the Spirit ***day by day*** (this is covered under "The Teaching Ministry of the Spirit" below).
- 2) By being available to the Spirit ***moment by moment*** through submitting ourselves to His will (this is covered immediately below).

(b) Being Led by the Spirit versus Resisting the Spirit:

(16) But I tell you, walk in the Spirit and you will not carry out what the flesh lusts for. (17) For what the flesh lusts for is contrary to the Spirit's will, and the Spirit is opposed to what the flesh lusts for. Since these are diametrically opposed to each other in this way, what you are doing is not what you yourself choose.  
Galatians 5:16-17

As this passage makes clear, there is also a sense in which the believer is either being led by the Spirit or resisting the Spirit, is either spiritual or not. So while the "day by day" spiritual advance of the believer in question may be great or small, and while the "moment by moment" responsiveness of the believer to the Spirit may be great or small, it is also possible for the advance to be stalled and for the response to be non-existent. The former problem is clearly a worse one than the latter – as representing a longer-term trend rather than what may be

only a momentary lapse, but both problems are to be avoided by any believer who wants to glorify our Lord, earn a good reward, and stay spiritually safe.

(6) If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we are lying and are not acting truthfully. (7) But if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we do have fellowship with one another (i.e., with the Father and the Son; cf. v.3), and the blood of Jesus His Son is cleansing us from all sin.

1st John 1:6-7

As this passage and Galatians 5:16-17 quoted immediately above make very clear, there are only two paths for the Christian to choose from. We can follow the Spirit, walking in the light, or we can follow the flesh, walking in the darkness. A "day by day" trend of following the flesh in the darkness will bring divine discipline, and may result over time in either the loss of faith (apostasy) or the ultimate divine discipline of the sin unto death.<sup>41</sup> The solution to this problem is a complete change of mind by the believer so as to turn away from this dangerously wrong path and turn back to the right path of following the Spirit in the light (biblical "repentance"). A "moment by moment" aberration in an otherwise good Christian walk may also bring divine discipline and impedes at least temporarily the believer's forward progress in the Lord. The solution to this problem is an immediate admission to the Lord of the believer's recognition of his/her mistake so as to free him/her from the control of the flesh and restore instead the control of the Spirit (biblical "confession"). As far as "backsliding" and sin proper are concerned (along with their effects and techniques of recovery), these issues are proper the province of Hamartiology (and have been covered in part 3B of this series). Here we are concerned with the role of the Spirit and our relationship to Him and His leadership in our acceptance of His leadership or, contrariwise, our resistance to it, whether momentarily or chronically. Have we sinned? That is a violation of the Spirit's leadership, and we need to confess in order to put our relationship with Him back on an even keel.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1st John 1:9

If, however, we ever find ourselves wandering far from the Lord, resisting the Spirit's leadership and living carnally for a long period of time, returning to Him will require a complete reassessment of our wrong approach – repentance – and a longer process of recovery.

(8) Draw closer to God, and He will draw closer to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and sanctify your hearts, you double-minded. (9) Lament and grieve and mourn. Let your laughter turn to grief, and your joy to humiliation. (10) Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you.

James 4:8-10

From the positive point of view, being led by the Spirit is the functional definition of what it means to be a child of God, the only way to move forward in the Christian life and the only way to avoid carrying out the desires of the sinful flesh:

As many as are being led [forward] by the Spirit, these are the ones who are [truly] the sons of God.

Romans 8:14

(16) But I tell you, walk in the Spirit and you will not carry out what the flesh lusts for.

Galatians 5:16

We will have much more to say about the mechanics of the Spirit's guidance of us and the manner of our response to Him in section II.B.3.b.3 below, "Walking in the Spirit (Spiritual Progress)". Suffice it to say here that our willingness to accept His leadership in all things great and small is the key factor in spiritual growth and progress, that our ability to hear His "still, small voice" is something that develops as we grow in the Lord, and that our consciences, carefully calibrated by the Word of God, are one of the main tools the Spirit uses to direct our paths, both in the moment and over time. With that in mind, we will take up here what scripture has to say about responding to the Spirit from the negative point of view. Scripture has a good deal to say about this, no doubt in part because, as is often the case, it is possible to get a very good idea about what is to be done by seeing clearly what ought not to be done. In examining the prohibitions which are designed to steer us away from resisting the Spirit, we will gain a better idea of what responding to Him consists of.<sup>42</sup>

#### (i) Grieving the Spirit:

But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit.

Isaiah 63:10a NKJV (cf. Ps.78:17; 78:40)

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God with whom you were sealed for a [future] day of redemption (i.e., the day of resurrection).

Ephesians 4:30 (cf. Rom.8:26)

Causing the Spirit "mental anguish" in "grief" for our bad conduct is clearly an anthropopathism (inasmuch as the Spirit is God and cannot actually be "pained" in any way); it is also clearly a bad thing and not a good thing. The Spirit's "grief" is His "mourning" over our refusal to respond to His guidance and our determination instead to rebel against His will expressed directly to our consciences, and indirectly through His illumination of God's will to us in His Word. The Spirit is "grieved" when we sin and commit ourselves to a sinful course. We reject His advice, given through His prompting of our hearts and the Word of God, at our spiritual peril.

#### (ii) Quenching the Spirit:

Do not put out the Spirit's fire.  
1st Thessalonians 5:19

This verse is often translated "do not quench the Spirit" (KJV, NKJV, NIV, ESV, NASB). In any case, the essential meaning is the same. We are here commanded not to work at cross-purposes to the Spirit's influence, specifically, not to, by our own poor decisions, reduce His effectiveness in our lives. Again, this is not necessarily an absolute (complete "quenching" would require the loss of the Spirit entirely, something that can only take place through apostasy). The Spirit is the source of the exceptional motivation and "zeal" for Jesus Christ that Church Age believers can experience, stemming from a proper emotional response to the truth we are learning – something which ought to characterize every Christian's walk (as contrasted with worked-up, false emotion so prevalent in our day):

In regard to your enthusiasm, do not be hesitant, but be boiling with the Spirit.  
Romans 12:11

Allowing the Spirit to "set us aboil" requires spiritual growth (to form and increase day by day our spiritual capacity) as well as our moment by moment responsiveness to Him (as we heed His guidance given through our consciences and proper contemplation of the truth of the Word of God in our hearts). "Quenching" the Spirit – putting out His "fire" – is taking the opposite course of spiritual regression or lassitude over time, and indulging in a pattern of sinful behavior instead of a sanctified moment by moment walk. The Spirit does not force us to grow (that requires many positive choices), nor does the Spirit force us to "be good" (that requires many refusals to make negative choices), but a Christian who is not growing and/or is not walking in a sanctified way is limiting by those poor choices and bad decisions the potential power and effect of the Spirit's influence on his/her life.

(iii) Being Carnal as opposed to being Spiritual:

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ.  
1st Corinthians 3:1 NKJV

"Carnality" is the state of following the flesh instead of following the Spirit.

But I tell you, walk in the Spirit and you will not carry out what the flesh lusts for.  
Galatians 5:16

For believers in Jesus Christ, we are either following the Holy Spirit or we are following our sin natures, our flesh, living a life of carnality instead of one of spirituality. This can be a long-standing pattern (and that is a very dangerous state of affairs with the potential of leading either to apostasy or else to the sin unto death) or it can be a momentary lapse. Recovery from sin requires a change of mind on our part (biblical as opposed to emotional repentance) and confession (admitting our sin to the Lord). At that point, we become "spiritual" again instead

of "carnal", that is, characterized by the Holy Spirit to whom we thereby give back the lead in our lives, and not characterized by the sin nature or "flesh" which we had, in very counterproductive fashion, allowed to usurp the the leadership over us. The end of the former is growth, progress and production in the Christian life, while the end of the latter is regression, divine discipline, and, in extreme cases, physical or spiritual death (apostasy and the sin unto death respectively):

For the thought-pattern of the flesh (i.e., carnality) results in death, but the thought-pattern of the Spirit (i.e., spirituality) results in life and peace.

Romans 8:6

Only "spiritual" Christians can accomplish anything for Jesus Christ, that is, only Christians who are walking in the power of the Spirit, growing in the truth day by day and taking pains to avoid sin – and to turn from it and confess it immediately when they do stumble as we all do (Gal.6:1; Col.1:9; cf. 1Cor.14:37; 1Pet.2:5).

(iv) Being Out of Fellowship:

We have already covered the biblical concept of "fellowship" (Greek: *koinonia*) in our discussion of the "Fellowship in Christ" which is ours by virtue of our birthright as believers who have been "born again in Jesus" (see section II.B.2.b.1.c.3 above: "Fellowship with Christ"). This fellowship with our Lord is ours "by position"; that is, we have this right of fellowship because we belong to Him. In experiential terms, however, fellowship is not automatic. That is, in terms of "where we actually are" at any given moment in our Christian lives, this fellowship is dependent upon our responsiveness to the Spirit's leadership. This is true both in the long term (i.e., our experience of the wonderful fellowship with Christ which is possible through the Spirit's ministry can and should grow as we grow in Jesus), and also in the short term: sin causes this fellowship to rupture (temporarily), so that turning from sin and confessing it to the Lord is a requirement of the "moment by moment" fellowship which is our heritage as sons and daughters of God the Father in His beloved Son.

If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

1st John 1:6 NKJV

But . . .

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1st John 1:9 NKJV

. . . thus restoring the fellowship from which sin temporarily estranged us.

That is why in Ephesians 5:18 Paul contrasts sin (using the over-filling of wine as an example) to the leadership/filling of the Spirit: we can have one or the other,

but not both. Walking with Christ and walking in the Spirit is antithetical to sin and vice versa.

(v) Lying to the Spirit and Testing the Spirit:

(3) But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? (4) While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."

Acts 5:3-4 NKJV

Then Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out."

Acts 5:9 NKJV

Since both of these phrases are employed by Peter during the same incident, that of Ananias and Sapphira and their false representation of the charitable act for which they wished to receive more credit than was due, they may be considered as essentially synonymous. Herein we see the Spirit as the One who empowers true Christian charity and indeed all legitimate Christian works. Representing some such a "deed" as coming from the Spirit – when it has actually been done in the power of the flesh and on the basis of ulterior motives – is really an affront to the Spirit (rather than to the brothers and sisters who were the putative object of deceit). We see here, in common with all of the other negative examples in this section, behavior which responds to the flesh instead of to the Spirit. If we are being dishonest with our fellow believers, we are, in effect, "lying to the Spirit", and we are "putting Him to the test", because while He desires to help us live the way we should in all respects, instead of following His guidance and leadership in such instances we are living and behaving as if He were not even indwelling us at all. This is a dangerous game to play and has the capacity to adversely affect our spiritual health in a most serious way – even if we are not treated precisely in the way Ananias and Sapphira were.

(vi) Resisting the Spirit:

"You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you."

Acts 7:51 NKJV

Stephen was addressing here the religious Jews of Jerusalem – who were about to stone him to death in their unbelief. The Spirit always witnesses to the truth. Unbelievers who are not willing to respond to the gospel of necessity are resisting His witness. But believers too, whenever we are unwilling either to accept the truth of the Word of God on any point – or are unwilling to apply it to our lives for whatever reason – are likewise resisting the Spirit. Again, here is an example, a decidedly negative one, of putting the flesh in the position of leadership over



one's life, rather than the Holy Spirit. For if we do not accept the Spirit's leadership and follow His guidance, then of necessity we shall be following the flesh – to no good end.

(vii) Hindrance to Prayer in the Spirit:

We are told to pray "in the Spirit" (Eph.6:18), and scripture makes it very clear that the Holy Spirit is the one who empowers our prayers (Rom.8:26-27). For that reason, it is of course equally true that if we are following the flesh instead of the Spirit, our prayer life will be negatively affected, and this is a subject important enough to be specifically emphasized:

Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

1st Peter 3:7 NKJV (cf. 1Pet.4:7)

(viii) Insulting the Spirit:

Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?

Hebrews 10:29 NKJV

The situation described above in Hebrews was that of Jewish believers continuing to participate in the temple sacrifices which proclaimed a Messiah not yet come and not yet having died for our sins. This was a travesty (engaged in for personal convenience) which amounted to subjecting the Spirit (who told them in their hearts not to do so) to a terrible insult (the Greek word here, *enhybrizo*, means "subjecting to *hybris*"). Clearly, this level of rejection of the Spirit's leadership – to the point of insulting Him and His witness – is a horrific thing for a believer to do. It demonstrates that there are levels of rejecting the Spirit's influence – just as there are levels of accepting it. The Lord will take us as far "in the Spirit" as we are willing to go; and if we are determined to resist Him and reject His advice and guidance, we should take care lest the end be worse than the beginning and we fall away from faith entirely.<sup>43</sup>

**Summary:**

In the case of all of the negative commands and negative examples listed above, the problem is sin of some sort, resisting the Holy Spirit's guidance toward the good path and instead succumbing to the sin nature's desires to go down the wrong path. To the extent that we are controlled by the sin nature, to that extent we are not controlled by the Spirit – and vice versa. This contest for the control of our hearts is one we shall examine in greater detail below from the positive point of view in section II.B.3.b.3: "Walking in the Spirit". As discussed above, the influence of the Spirit will wax or wane depending upon our consistency in responding to Him over time; it will also cease for the most part when we choose

to sin which is always against His will and commence again absolutely when we turn away from our sin, confessing it to the Lord. Thus, the Spirit's influence over the believer's life is both diachronic (growing or declining day by day in relative terms as we grow closer to the Lord through believing and applying His truth or instead draw away from Him) and also synchronic (being either active when we are following the Spirit at the moment or largely dormant if and when we become involved in sin).

All believers sin, of course (Rom.3:23; Jas.3:2; 1Jn.1:6-10), but all believers should be growing in sanctification day by day, failing less often (and less dramatically) with every passing day. All believers are also responsible to the Lord to be growing and advancing spiritually more and more day by day – though it is sadly unnecessary to point out that this correct way of walking with Jesus Christ is somewhat uncommon in our Laodicean era of the Church. If we do make it our practice to grow and advance in the Spirit, then the Spirit's influence on us and our sensitivity to His guidance will also grow and increase over time. This proper approach will also make our stumbles less frequent (and less dramatic), as the Spirit exercises an increasing influence and control over us – an influence and control that we must cede to Him at all times and in all cases, otherwise His ministry will not be benefitting us in the way that it could and in the way that it should. The Spirit is in us and desires to help us; He will speak to our consciences – and all the more clearly as we grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Word of God – but He does not force our free will. It is up to us to respond to Him and His ministering to us – or fail to do so. This is what it means in Ephesians 5:18 to be "filled with the Spirit", responding to Him and His ministry to the maximum possible degree, while leaving off being "filled with wine", and all of the other sinful substitutes the flesh desires to put in place of what the Spirit wants – and He wants only what is best for us in every way.

## (2) The Teaching Ministry of the Spirit (Spiritual Growth):

"But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my Name, He will **teach** you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."  
John 14:26 (cf. Jn.15:26)

"But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will **guide you into all truth**. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come."  
John 16:13 NIV

"For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."  
Luke 12:12 NKJV

### (a) Definition:

As our Lord's words above indicate, anticipating the gift of the Spirit about to be given at the first Pentecost of the Church, the Holy Spirit is the One who teaches us the truth, He is our Guide into all things true, into all divine truth.

As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit – just as it has taught you, remain in him.  
1st John 2:27 NKJV

The anointing mentioned in this passage is the Holy Spirit, referred to in this way to recall the baptism of the Spirit (specifically, our being baptized with the Spirit when we believe and are entered into Christ). John uses the analogy of anointing to emphasize the empowerment believers all have to aid us in learning all of God's truth, having the ultimate Teacher of truth within us from the point of our salvation. However, this passage is often wrongly construed in the church-visible today to suggest that individual Christians have no need of other believers to teach them. One would hope that the incorrectness of that interpretation would be obvious to all – after all, if that were the case, why would there be any need for the teaching gifts which Paul assures us are preeminent in the Church (1Cor.12:28; cf. Eph.4:11-16)?

In fact, while the rendering in the first half of the verse above "you do not need anyone to teach you" is a literal (and a common) one, it is not technically correct in that it fails to realize that the direct object here – what it is about which John's audience has no further need of instruction – has been left out. The so-called "ellipsis of the direct object" is a common feature of Greek when that object is otherwise obvious. And that object is obvious here, especially since John goes on to spell things out in the second half of the verse: "just as it (i.e., the anointing, the Holy Spirit) has taught you, remain in him (i.e., in Christ)". This passage is about staying true to Jesus Christ and not being misled by any anti-Christ (e.g., the preceding verse: "I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray" NKJV). That is, this statement is a mandate from John for his readers to stay faithful, to keep believing, "to abide" *in Him* (Jesus Christ). It is this truth about which John's parishioners "need no further teaching" (as the context and the second half of the verse show), *not* everything in the entire realm of biblical truth. If this verse meant that believers did not need teachers, then what in the world is John doing writing them a five chapter epistle?

"You have no need for anyone to teach you [*this thing* just discussed in vv.20-26, namely, that Jesus is the Christ – so stay faithful to Him]."  
1st John 2:27b

Thus the passage in question does not reflect a promise from God to make all of His truth accessible to every believer without the hard work of studying, teaching, learning and believing the truth, nor does it exempt the individual believer from subordinating him/herself to a teacher who is prepared and qualified to illuminate the truths of the Word of God in order to maximize spiritual growth. We are all members of the Body of Christ, and we all have our discrete gifts. We need each other, and no Christian can be independent in the process of spiritual growth through learning and believing the truth – not, at least, and make progress past the point of his/her inherent limitations arising from not having

the teaching gift (as well as not having the requisite preparation in the vast majority of cases: knowledge of the original languages, ancient history, church history, systematic theology, etc.).

(3) For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: ***Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought***, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.

(4) For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, (5) so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. (6) We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; (7) if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; (8) if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

Romans 12:3-8 NIV

The Holy Spirit's teaching ministry is essential, as it turns out, for anyone to learn any divine truth, and having Him reside on our inside gives believers of the Church Age a tremendous advantage in learning all of the "things which God has prepared for those who love Him" (1Cor.2:9 NKJV). As with many of the Spirit's ministries, however (notably the Spirit's guidance and empowerment of our Christian walk; see section II.B.3.b.3 below, "Walking in the Spirit"), this teaching is not "automatic" in the sense of requiring no effort on the part of believers. The Spirit's teaching ministry does not relieve believers of the responsibility of reading the Bible, or of seeking out an appropriate teaching ministry, or of listening diligently to what is taught, or of believing the truth that is taught, or of taking pains to remember the truths once revealed by the Spirit through this sanctified process, or of "meditating day and night" on those truths (Ps.1:2), or of applying them to one's life and walk with the Lord. As in any academic situation, the teacher (in this case, the Spirit) must be respected, and this includes following in humility the course of instruction laid down and the method provided to learn what is being taught. Believers who wish to misapply 1st John 2:27 and (incorrectly) understand it to mean that they have been automatically filled with all knowledge without any effort, or, alternatively, that their own (otherwise exemplary) efforts to read and explore scripture are sufficient unto themselves without any recourse to the teaching ministries and infrastructure for spiritual growth the Spirit has provided are in fact doing great disservice to themselves and compromising their chances for significant spiritual growth.

(b) Epistemology and Spiritual Growth:

(1) The first account I produced [for you], O Theophilus, dealt with all the things which Jesus did and taught from the beginning, (2) until the day when Jesus was taken up [into heaven], having given instructions through the Holy Spirit to those

apostles whom He had selected.

Acts 1:1-2

The second verse above gives a complete panoramic view of the method and process of spiritual growth. Growing up spiritually is the process of hearing and believing the truth. This truth is presented primarily through orthodox teaching which is carefully attended to by the Christian in question and then believed. Once believed, this truth now resident in the heart is available for the believer to use in his/her Christian walk, and also for the Spirit to utilize in guiding the believer down correct and righteous paths. We have seen above how that the entire infrastructure of spiritual growth is the province of the Holy Spirit and is absolutely essential for spiritual growth to occur. In the example of Acts 1:1-2 above, our Lord taught the truth from the Bible of His day, perfectly known and understood by Him, so that the Bible, the prepared teacher, and the place, circumstances and opportunity for hearing the truth are all provided by the Spirit for any believer who truly does want to grow up spiritually – and all of these elements are necessary for spiritual growth to occur. Moreover, without the Spirit's ministry, God's truth cannot be understood in the first place, nor accepted into the believers heart by faith so as to produce spiritual growth in the second.

In order for any human being to have a direct conversation with God – which is in effect what hearing, understanding and accepting His truth is – some supernatural accommodation is absolutely necessary. We are, after all, sinful flesh, and the problem of how metaphysical truth can make its way into the corrupt heart of human beings is one which has much exercised philosophers and theologians over the centuries. Suffice it say, as the verses quoted above suggest, that it is in all such cases the Holy Spirit who bridges this otherwise unbridgeable gap. What is impossible for men is not so for God, and to the Spirit has been given the honor of making God's truth perceptible – for all who are inclined to open their ears to the Spirit's still, small voice.

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Revelation 2:7a NKJV (cf. Rev.2:11; 2:17; 2:29; 3:6; 3:13; 3:22)

This process of Holy Spirit epistemology – the Spirit acting as intermediary between absolute truth (which is entirely spiritual) and our human spirit (which is the ultimate receptor of this truth) – is the divine means of providing the gospel message,<sup>44</sup> and explains how sinful human beings who are still dead in their sins can even understand God's truth: they can because the Holy Spirit "short-circuits", so to speak, the normal route of information and makes the truth about the Person and work of Christ perceptible **directly** to the unbeliever's human spirit whenever the gospel message is presented (which explains why "blaspheming the Spirit" is an unforgivable sin: it is synonymous with rejecting the gospel which the Spirit is presenting, and without accepting the gospel, no one can be saved).

"Hardness of heart" is the natural state of all human beings, and between the time we are born and the time we respond positively to the gospel so as to be saved our hearts inevitably pick up a good deal of the world's detritus. Put another way, we are born conditioned to think in a worldly way, and our thought patterns harden into worldly ways of thinking as we walk through this world without the Lord. When we are born again, in addition to the eternal life we receive positionally as a result of being reborn into the family of God, we also receive a "new start for the heart", which is "circumcised", so to speak, or opened up for the full and unfettered reception of the truth as the Spirit prepares us for the process of spiritual growth.

No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is ***circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit***, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.

Romans 2:29 NIV

(22) "The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. (23) But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!"  
Matthew 6:22-23 NASB

When we are born again, while we were "blind", now "we see", and it behooves all believers to keep their "eye", that is, the perceptive faculty of their heart, clear of anything (worldly thinking) that might veil complete and unhindered reception and appreciation of the truth. The Spirit is the One who made the initial bridge (resulting in our ability to perceive the truth of the gospel message), and after salvation the Spirit is the One who "circumcises" our hearts, bringing about the often reported salvation experience of seeing clearly for the first time (the "light", so to speak, goes on). But just as at salvation, the truth we receive afterwards has to be believed to benefit us. The Spirit makes it clear to us, but we are free to reject that truth. Failing to pursue the truth, failing to accept the truth once received, being lackadaisical about treasuring up, meditating on, and applying the truth we have stored in our hearts through faith by means of the Spirit's ministry all contribute to the darkening of our hearts and the degradation of the truth we have retained. The end of that process, if allowed to proceed to a terminal degree, results in a state which, as in the passage above, is worse than having been enlightened in the first place (2Pet.2:20-22; cf. Jas.1:15); in many other cases the result is "merely" loss of reward (e.g., Matt.13:22). For these reasons, it is important for all believers to recognize that spiritual growth is not an automatic thing. The initial blush of emotion which accompanies salvation fades in the crucible of life if not supported by a constant influx of truth, and so too will the clarity of vision which all receive upon turning to God the Father through Jesus Christ our Lord – unless we follow through in proceeding along the path which we have been called to walk, safeguarding the deposit of truth in our hearts by building on it daily (rather than allowing it to atrophy and decay).

Now grow up through the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

2nd Peter 3:18

This verse directly connects spiritual growth to knowledge (*gnosis*) and grace, the means by which God's truth becomes useful to the believer. To fulfill the command above, therefore, not only is knowledge (of the truth) necessary but this truth must also be believed. An unbeliever of exceptional mental ability might be able to memorize a systematic theology, but even if said work were 100% correct in its representation of Bible truth, this would not do the person in question any good whatsoever – not unless he/she was led thereby to accept Jesus Christ as Savior. Similarly for believers, mere knowledge (*gnosis*) is insufficient to produce growth. But God has provided a "grace" mechanism for the conversion of mere information into something so special and powerful it is the means for all Christian growth, advance and production. That means is the Holy Spirit within us making all genuine truth understandable to our hearts (thus side-stepping the so-called "epistemological problem") coupled with our response to His witness **through faith**. In other words, knowledge is a mere understanding of the facts; **faith** is required to convert that knowledge into the fuel which empowers the believer's inner life. When we hear the truth, the Spirit makes it real and understandable to us. When we **believe** His witness to that truth, we make said truth our own, and the knowledge (*gnosis*) we have heard becomes, by means of the Spirit's ministry and through our faith, **epignosis** (sometimes translated "full knowledge" in the versions, although they often fail to distinguish between these two critically important words).<sup>45</sup>

(9) But as it is written: "What the eye has not seen and the ear has not heard, and [what] has not entered the heart of man, [these are the very] things which God has prepared for those who love Him". (10) And God has revealed [these very things] to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches out everything, even the deep things of God. (11) For who knows the things of a man except the spirit of man which is in him? In the same way too no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. (12) And we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, in order that we might know the things graciously given to us by God. (13) And these are the very things we are speaking about, not in words taught by human wisdom, but with words of the Spirit, communicating spiritual information to spiritual people. (14) Now the unspiritual man does not receive the [deeper] things of the Spirit of God. For they are foolishness to him and he is not able to understand them because they are appreciated [only] through spiritual means. (15) But the spiritual man does appreciate them all, though he himself is not appreciated [in this regard] by anyone. (16) For [as it says] "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Who will instruct Him?" But we do have the very thinking (lit., "mind") of Christ (i.e., His truth from the Spirit).  
1st Corinthians 2:9-16

This passage, carefully considered, tells us all we need to know about God's special provisions to His children for their reception of His truth, the essence of

which is the communication of the Holy Spirit to our human spirit (cf. also Rom.8:16; 1Jn.2:10; 2:27):

(9) But as it is written: "What the eye has not seen and the ear has not heard, and [what] has not entered the heart of man, [these are the very] things which God has prepared for those who love Him".

v. 9: Divine truth, something which cannot "enter into the heart" through human sensual perception, has nevertheless been "prepared by God for those who love Him". So while our physical eyes and ears are incapable of discerning God's divine truth on their own, God's special provision of this truth, designed and meant from the beginning to be received and understood by His children, guarantees that God has also provided the means for this to occur, not physical and empirical means, but spiritual and invisible means, grace means: the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who makes the truth we hear real and understandable to our human spirits so that we may believe it and grow thereby: only through faith is the truth converted from mere knowledge (*gnosis*) to the status of truth in the heart understood and now usable by the Spirit (*epi-gnosis*).

(10) And God has revealed [these very things] to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches out everything, even the deep things of God.

v. 10: It is "through His [Holy] Spirit" that God "has revealed" His truth, beginning with the gospel and continuing for those who accept Jesus Christ as their Savior into every aspect of divine truth contained in scripture. The Spirit is the One who makes the reception of divine truth possible (for physical eyes and ears are incapable of correctly perceiving supernatural truth without the Spirit's help, and our earthly mind is unable to understand it absent this divine assistance). As God, the Holy Spirit knows all divine truth, and He is capable of communicating even "the deep things" of God to those who respond, speaking directly to our human spirits without the complication of having it filtered through our fleshly minds.

(11) For who knows the things of a man except the spirit of man which is in him? In the same way too no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.

v. 11: Just as there are certain things which only individual human beings can really know about themselves, so God is the only One who can know about God and God's supernatural truth. Therefore just as we can only know about someone else's deep inner-thoughts if they tell us, so the only way for us to know about God's thinking, God's truth, is if He communicates it to us, and it is the Holy Spirit whose ministry it is to communicate with us, doing so by ministering the truth directly to our human spirits and making it understandable to us whenever the truth is proclaimed.

(12) And we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, in order that we might know the things graciously given to us by God.



v. 12: Believers are explicitly said to have been given the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of the perception of "the things graciously given to us by God" (i.e., the whole realm of divine truth). That is to say, we are given to have the Spirit within us the better to receive, retain and make use of the truth of the Word of God – the only means of growth, progress and production for Jesus Christ. In the case of any and all who are not yet part of God's family, the "good news" of God's gift of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ is made understandable through the same ministry of the Spirit who acts in this interpretive capacity whenever the gospel is being proclaimed.

(13) And these are the very things we are speaking about, not in words taught by human wisdom, but with words of the Spirit, communicating spiritual information to spiritual people.

v. 13: God's spiritual process for communicating truth through the Holy Spirit is here seen to "short-circuit" the worldly, physical process of normal perception: spiritual matters are empowered by and made understandable through the Spirit's teaching ministry so that human agents of divine truth are able to "communicate spiritual matters" (which would otherwise be incomprehensible) "to spiritual people", that is, those who are being enabled by the ministry of the Spirit to receive this supernatural, spiritual information (limited to perception of the gospel in the case of unbelievers). In this way, the problem of the sin nature infesting our earthly mind is avoided, and the truth we are given to understand becomes part of the treasure of our heart – when we believe it as the Spirit testifies to it.

(14) Now the unspiritual man does not receive the [deeper] things of the Spirit of God. For they are foolishness to him and he is not able to understand them because they are appreciated [only] through spiritual means.

v. 14: With the exception of the gospel, it is impossible for unbelievers to comprehend spiritual truths, since they lack the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit, and it is only through the Spirit's teaching ministry that the truth we hear taught from a godly source becomes understandable to our human spirits, and is then appropriated into our hearts by faith, becoming not mere *gnosis*, knowledge, but *epignosis*, full knowledge, completely understood by us through accepting the Spirit's testimony, believing the truth of the truth we are taught. An unbeliever may be able to pass a multiple-choice test on such information (knowledge: *gnosis*), but only the believer truly understands the significance of the truth the information contains – and only when and if said information is accepted through faith. The Spirit makes the truth understandable to us, but that truth we are taught is only retained (converted from *gnosis* to *epignosis*, from merely human knowledge to "full knowledge") when we believe the truth of it.

(15) But the spiritual man does appreciate them all (i.e., the "deeper things of the Spirit of God"), though he himself is not appreciated [in this regard] by anyone.

v. 15: In contrast to unbelievers, believers are able, with the Spirit's help, to receive, comprehend, believe and understand all divine truth, appropriating all of the "deeper things of the Spirit of God", that is, the truths of the Word of God which are made one's own when what is taught is accepted by faith. However, since this is accomplished through the Spirit's agency, the world is incapable of understanding how it is that believers receive the truth and make it their own through faith.

(16) For [as it says] "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Who will instruct Him?" But we do have the very thinking (lit., "mind") of Christ (i.e., His truth from the Spirit).

v. 16: As this quotation from Isaiah 40:13 suggests, divine truth may seem entirely inaccessible, but as members of the Body of Jesus Christ, we have access to the very thinking of Christ, the whole truth of the Bible, through the ministry of the Spirit. Indeed, the actual word in Isaiah is not "mind" but "Spirit" – and we believers actually do have the Spirit of the Lord indwelling us (cf. Rom.8:27).

(17) Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Lord's Spirit is, **there is freedom.**

(18) And everyone of us, if we reflect the Lord's glory with no "veil" obscuring our faces (i.e., with unsullied Christian witness), is being transformed into the same image [of God] (i.e., become more Christ-like as we use our will to respond to Him) so as to reflect an ever greater degree of [God's] glory [as we do so] (lit., "from glory to glory") – exactly what is to be expected with the Lord's Spirit as the agent [of our transformation].

2nd Corinthians 3:17-18

The freedom primarily referred to in this passage is, as the context shows, the believer's ability and opportunity to receive the truth through the Spirit's ministry. Unlike unbelieving Israel whose hearts are veiled to the truth even when it is heard physically, that veil has been removed "in Christ" in the case of all who believe, Jew and gentile both, leaving us "free" to understand the wonderful things God has for us in His holy scriptures via the Spirit's teaching ministry. When we hear, our heart is not veiled for the Spirit bridges the gap between the material mediums which carry the truth and our human spirit thirsty to receive it. All we need do to benefit from this great freedom to hear the truth, provided by the Holy Spirit, is to believe it. Believing transforms mere *gnosis*, "knowledge", into *epignosis*, "full knowledge", or, better, "knowledge which has been acknowledged" . . . through faith (thus becoming a part of the store of truth in our hearts).

Now grow up through the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

2nd Peter 3:18

By combining "grace" (the gift of the Spirit being the means of God's grace in sharing His truth with us) and "knowledge" (not *epignosis* but *gnosis*), Peter demonstrates the two elements necessary for growth: the Spirit's ministry and

the truth. But while these are the means of growth, our will is still involved as a critical part of the process: we have to **believe** the truth of the divine knowledge the Spirit teaches us (whenever we expose ourselves to orthodox Bible teaching) in order for that "knowledge" to become useful to the Spirit in guiding us in our walk with Jesus Christ. Faith is the doorkeeper of heart which allows the truth, witnessed to and communicated by the Spirit, to enter . . . or not. Only by believing the truth does that truth become *epignosis* or "full knowledge" in our hearts; only by receiving the truth and making it our own in our hearts through the ministry of the Spirit do we grow up in Jesus Christ and advance spiritually; and only by giving careful attention to the teaching of the Word of God can sufficient truth be amassed in the heart to produce spiritual maturity and the resultant ability to pass the tests of life that come to refine our faith, rendering us capable then of serving others through the ministries to which Christ has called us.

Part 6A of this series, Peripateology, will concern itself with the biblical discussion and practical implementation of the spiritual growth process from the standpoint of the believer's personal walk with the Lord and techniques to be utilized, but in order to demonstrate the critical importance scripture assigns to this aspect of the Spirit's ministering, a survey of the passages which reference the role of "knowledge believed" through the aid of the Holy Spirit, along with a brief comment on each, will perhaps not be out of place here.

**Unbelievers:** We can learn much from scriptural instances where the Bible discusses these principles in regard to unbelievers, whether it is a case of their rejection of the Spirit's teaching ministry and of God's desire for them to accept the truth, or the process of conversion when the gospel is accepted.

"Whenever anyone hears the message (lit., "word", *logos*) of the kingdom but **does not let it** [penetrate fully] **in**[to his heart], the evil one comes and snatches away what was **sown in his heart**. This is the one sown beside the road."

Matthew 13:19 (cf. Rom.1:28)

"And these are the ones beside the road where the Word is sown. And When they hear it, Satan comes immediately and removes the Word which **has been sown into them**."

Mark 4:15

"And the ones [sown] beside the road are those who have heard [the truth of the gospel], then the devil comes and **removes the Word** from their heart, so that they might not **believe and be saved**."

Luke 8:12

These verses are very revealing regarding the internal process of the rejection of the truth of the gospel by unbelievers. In His teaching role, the Holy Spirit communicates the truth of the gospel to the unbeliever in question, but said person refuses to listen, refuses to believe, refuses to allow the truth of what is

being said into his/her heart – with the result that the intellectual knowledge of the gospel does not suffice to save because it is not "mixed with faith" so as to transform the *gnosis* into *epignosis*. This truth, this knowledge of the gospel, once rejected, is then swiftly contradicted and opposed by the evil one until it vanishes completely from the now even more hardened heart:

For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed<sup>46</sup> with faith in those who heard it.

Hebrews 4:2 NKJV (cf. Jas.1:22-24)

Without faith, without believing the Spirit's testimony to the gospel, there is no profit for those who hear it (indeed, greater hardness results: e.g., Rom.1:21-32). The truth of the gospel (or any divine truth) is foolishness to the confirmed unbeliever (1Cor.2:14), because the Spirit's testimony may only be understood by believing it: faith is the mechanism which converts *gnosis* into *epignosis* (cf. 1Cor.2:12).<sup>47</sup>

[God] who wants all men to be saved and come to acceptance (*epignosis*) of the truth.

1st Timothy 2:4a (cf. 2Tim.2:25)

As this verse makes clear, "being saved" is otherwise defined as "accepting the truth", and specifically, accepting the Spirit's testimony by faith with the result that when the information (*gnosis*) about the gospel is communicated and made understandable by the Spirit, the unbeliever in question then accepts the truth of that testimony by **believing** it – the means whereby *gnosis* is transformed into *epignosis* – so as to be saved.

(8) And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, (9) and he made no distinction between us and them, **having cleansed their hearts by faith.**

Acts 15:8-9 ESV

In this last example, the end of the process of conversion is described whereby the new believer is given the ability to receive further truth. Instead of rejecting the truth testified to by the Spirit (as in the case of the hard-packed ground in the parable of the Sower), the truth of the gospel has been accepted by faith (as is God's will as evidenced in 1Tim.2:4), with the result that the unbelieving heart is purified – through faith in the gospel message communicated by the Holy Spirit. The previous darkened heart is now illuminated and can see the light, the truth witnessed to by the Spirit. Whereas formerly unable to discern or see or accept truth because of hardening, hardening has now been removed and the new convert can see and understand the truth for what it is (rather than regarding it as foolishness in the manner of the unbeliever: 1Cor.12:14; cf. Rom.10:2).

Sadly, this process may also be reversed. Believers who have once accepted the truth of the gospel but who nonetheless come later to reject it (as in the case of

the seed planted in shallow ground in the parable of the Sower, those who "believe for a while" but then apostatize: Lk.8:13), return to their blindness by reversing course and rejecting what they had once believed:

(20) For if after having escaped the defilements of this world by recognizing (*epignosis*) our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ they should be overcome [spiritually] by becoming involved again in these foul things, then they have become worse off than they were before. (21) For it would have been better for them not to have accepted (*epignosko*) the Righteous Way in the first place, rather than – once having accepted (*epignosko*) this holy command [for faith in Christ] committed to them – to **turn their backs on it** now. (22) And so in their case this proverb is true: "The dog has returned to his vomit, and the sow, though washed, to her muddy sty".  
2nd Peter 2:20-22

### **Believers:**

(5) Because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, (6) which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew (*epignosko* – i.e., actually believed) the grace of God in truth;  
Colossians 1:5-6 NKJV

But with respect to the progress you have made, keep on advancing in the same way!  
Philippians 3:16

Spiritual growth, spiritual progress and advance, is accomplished in the same way in which we became believers in the first place, namely, by hearkening to the Spirit's message of truth, believing it (and thereby storing it up in our hearts as usable knowledge, *epignosis*), and then applying that truth to our lives – honoring and following the way of truth in all we think and say and do – in the power of the Holy Spirit.

"One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see."  
John 9:25b NKJV

The man born blind means this in the literal sense but we are certainly also meant to take it spiritually, especially since the statement is made to the spiritually blind Pharisees (cf. Jn.9:41). The tandem symbol of light and darkness and of accompanying perception (or lack thereof) is a common one in scripture and refers to the truth (light) perceived by those who are willing and able to perceive it (accept it in faith).

"The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness.

If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!"  
Matthew 6:22-23 NKJV

The eye thus represents the ability of believers to perceive the truth, something that is only possible through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Unbelievers are helped by the Spirit to understand the basic truths of the gospel so that they might be saved – through accepting that truth in faith (otherwise the experience only serves to demonstrate and exacerbate their hardness of heart; cf. Matt.13:4; 13:19; Mk.4:4; 4:15; Lk.8:5; 8:12). Believers now have the Holy Spirit indwelling them to aid them in perception of the truth at all times. But as the comparison of our Lord cited directly above suggests, even for believers keeping the "eye" clear (or good) and being very careful not to let it grow dark (or bad) is critical for our spiritual welfare. Since light is truth, keeping our inner spiritual perception clear obviously requires listening to the Spirit and taking in as much truth as possible, believing it, embracing it, meditating on it, and applying it to our lives. On the other hand, becoming nonchalant about the truth and neglecting to expose ourselves to its teaching will give the Spirit nothing to work with; similarly, rejecting the truth once heard – even though the Spirit is testifying to the genuineness of it – failing to believe and embrace it, never giving it a second thought and living our lives as if we have never heard it in the first place, is a recipe for spiritual torpor and regression: through such an approach our eye will eventually become dark for lack of light.

"My mother and My brothers are these who **hear** the word of God **and do it**" (i.e., believe it, retain it, and act on it).  
Luke 8:21b NKJV

(21) Therefore cast aside all [moral] filthiness and effluence of evil, and in humility [continue to] receive the Word implanted in you, for it is able to save your [eternal] lives. (22) Be doers of the Word and not merely hearers, deceiving yourselves. (23) Because if anyone is a hearer of the Word and not a doer, such a one is like a man who recognizes his natural face in a mirror – (24) for in this case, though he recognized himself, he straightway went about his business, soon forgetting what he looked like. (25) But he who sets his gaze upon the perfect law of freedom (i.e., scripture – the perfect mirror of the heart) and sticks with it, and is not a [mere] forgetful hearer [of the Word], but a doer of deeds [inspired by the Word], that man will be blessed in his "doing".

James 1:21-25

"Doers" of the Word are, obviously, those who follow the precepts of scripture in their actions. But what is seldom appreciated about this passage is that in order to "do" literally, a believer must first "do" in every other respect by seeking out the Word of God, listening to the Word of God, **believing** the truth of what is heard, holding onto that truth and then applying it to life-circumstances through the Spirit's guidance and empowerment (in thought and word and well as in literal "deed"). Merely hearing is not enough; but to get to "doing" in its entirety requires the believer to engage in the whole process of spiritual growth. That is to

say, the Word not only has to be heard but it has to be **implanted** by the Spirit through faith (v.21). This explanation, by the way, is supported by James' actual examples of "doers of the Word", namely, Abraham and Rahab whose "doing" consisted of passing significant tests of faith through their allegiance to the truth (rather than following some set of rules as is often assumed about James 1:21-25).

Solid [spiritual] food is for the [spiritually] mature, those who by [diligent] practice have trained their [spiritual] perceptive faculties to [properly] distinguish between good and evil.

Hebrews 5:14

Just as good habits in seeking out the truth, listening to it (with sufficient academic discipline), striving to retain it and meditating on it, and applying it to what we see and hear in this world will sharpen our spiritual "perceptive faculties", so we may expect the opposite approach to lead in the opposite direction. This explains why so many believers can be wildly enthusiastic about the Lord and the Word when first saved (since the supernatural experience of being born again has cleansed their hearts and given them a new start), but may later find themselves in a spiritual funk – through inattention to the light of the truth.

And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us a [new] heart<sup>48</sup> for coming to know the truth.

1st John 5:20a

The good news here is that the process is reversible: even if a believer has retrogressed into "spiritual dimness", the brightness can be restored, but only through the process of spiritual growth whose fuel and motive power is the truth of the Word of God illuminated by the Holy Spirit. Response to the light of the truth is the only deliverance from darkness and spiritual bondage.

(16) But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is removed – (17) for the Lord and the Spirit are one, and wherever the Lord's Spirit is, there is also freedom (i.e. the opportunity and power to understand the truth and thus do God's will).

2nd Corinthians 3:16-17

"You will know the truth, and the truth will liberate you."

John 8:32

(8) For you were once **darkness**, but now you are **light** in the Lord. Walk as children of **light**. (9) Now the fruit **light** produces accords with all goodness, righteousness and truth. (10) So [in all things] you should [always] be calculating what it is that pleases the Lord. (11) And do not participate in **dark** deeds which bear no fruit. But rather expose them as such. (12) For the things done in **darkness** by those [who reject the truth] are shameful even to mention. (13) But all things become **visible** [for what they really are] when they are illuminated by

the **light**, (14) because everything which has been made **visible** [through such illumination] is **light**. That is why it says, "Arise, sleeper! Awake from the dead, and Christ will **shine** [His light of truth] upon you!"

Ephesians 5:8-14

For God who said, "Let light shine forth from the darkness!", is He who has **shone forth** [His light] into our hearts to **illuminate** our knowledge of God's glory in the Person of Jesus Christ.

2nd Corinthians 4:6

"Therefore take heed **how** you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him".

Luke 8:18 NKJV

Hearing is not enough to turn the truth into something usable in our hearts. Indeed, hearing the truth and then being unwilling to believe it can result in the diminution of the stock of truth (*epignosis*) stored up in the heart so far.

For we are not writing any other [truths] to you other than what you both read and [actually] understand (*epigignosko*; i.e., have in your heart through believing them). And I am confidently hopeful that you hold onto (*epigignosko*) [these truths], even to the end.

2nd Corinthians 1:13

Paul's confidence in the resilience of the Corinthians' faith – in spite of their many failings – is founded upon his recognition that he has taught them the truth and that, by and large, they have believed it. That is the way to eternal reward, provided said truth is held fast in the heart by faith "to the end".

(17) [My prayer for you is] that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give to you a spirit of wisdom (i.e., the ability to apply truth) and revelation (i.e., the unveiling of truth made clear by the Spirit) by means of the full-knowledge (*epignosis*) of Him (i.e., through believing that testimony), (18) so that, with the eyes of your heart thus enlightened, you may understand what the hope of your calling [truly] is, what the riches of your glorious inheritance [truly are] in company with [all] the [other] saints, (19) and what the surpassing greatness of His power unto us who believe [truly is] – according to the very exercise of this powerful might of His (20) which He exercised in Christ by having raised Him from the dead.

Ephesians 1:17-20a

When the Christian walk is governed by responding to the Spirit's ministry (i.e., by seeking out and believing His testimony so as to have "full-knowledge" or *epignosis* of the truth), then the believer in Christ is characterized by that truth, its understanding (revelation) and application to life (wisdom). It is only in this way, enlightenment through spiritual growth, that the believer's spiritual eyes are opened so as to truly understand all the wonders and blessings that attend to our exalted status as of saints, those who belong to Jesus Christ, both in this life and



especially in the next: heavenly reward, inheritance in the New Jerusalem, and the resurrection of this temporary body into an eternal one wherein we shall enjoy all of these blessings forever.

(11) Christ Himself appointed some of us apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers (12) in order to prepare all of His holy people for their own ministry work, that the entire body of Christ might thus be built up, (13) until we all reach that unifying [goal] of belief in and full-knowledge (*epignosis*) of the Son of God, that each of us might be a perfect person, that is, that we might attain to that standard of maturity whose "attainment" is defined by Christ; (14) that we may no longer be immature, swept off-course and carried headlong by every breeze of so-called teaching that emanates from the trickery of men in their readiness to do anything to cunningly work their deceit, (15) but rather that we may, by embracing the truth in love, grow up in all respects with Christ, who is the head of the Church, as our model. (16) In this way, the entire body of the Church, fit and joined together by Him through the sinews He powerfully supplies to each and every part, works out its own growth for the building up of itself in love.

Ephesians 4:11-16

Few passages in scripture are more detailed or clear about the process of spiritual growth – if care is taken to let the words above sink in properly. Edification, growth, maturity is achieved by belief in the truth and resulting full-knowledge or *epignosis* (truth believed and retained by faith) stored up in the heart with the result that believer can now function in a mature way and not be "swept to and fro" by clever arguments and false teaching which run contrary to that truth. And the manner of assembling that critical mass of truth in the heart is responsiveness to good teaching – which has as its purpose just such edification. It is precisely this process which is the purpose of Christ's Church on earth, with every member participating in that process to effect the goal of individual and collective growth to maturity, progress and production – when everything (and everyone) is functioning as they should.

(9) And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in full-knowledge (*epignosis*: truth believed) and in all discernment, (10) so that you may be able to evaluate the things that are good and appropriate [for you to do] to be sincere and without offense in regard to the day of Christ (i.e., to gain a maximum reward at Christ's judgment seat), (11) full of the righteous production Jesus Christ [commends] to the glory and praise of God.

Philippians 1:9-11

In this passage we find the three stage process of growth, progress and production carefully lined out by the apostle Paul who prays for us all that we may: v.9) learn the truth so as to become mature (defined here by being effective in Christian love), leading to the first crown of reward, that of "righteousness"; v.10) through spiritual discernment thus attained (v.9), come to apply that truth more and more effectively in our Christian walk to the end of passing maturity

testing that results in a good reward, namely, the second crown, that of "life"; and v.11) finally come into our own ministries – each of which will aid in the process of the growth and spiritual progress of our brothers and sisters in Christ in some way – which most glorifies God (as well as leading to the third crown of reward, the crown of "glory").

(9) For this reason we also from the [very] day we heard [of your love] do not cease praying on your behalf and asking that you be fulfilled in regard to the full acceptance (*epignosis*) of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, (10) that you might walk worthy of the Lord to please Him in all things, bearing fruit in every good work, and growing by means of the full knowledge (*epignosis*) of God.

Colossians 1:9-10

Here Paul prays again (for the Colossians and for us) that we might be truly spiritually fulfilled – grow up spiritually – through having accepted the Spirit's witness to the truth (in our response to orthodox teaching resulting in *epignosis* in the heart sufficient to produce spiritual maturity); this results in "all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (i.e., the principles of truth understood and accepted in our heart on the one hand, and our corresponding ability in the Spirit to apply these principles correctly to the circumstances we confront on the other), that is, the ability to act wisely and with spiritual discernment both in our observation of life and also in our spiritual applications so that we may "walk worthy" of the Lord, passing the tests of maturity that come our way, and, eventually, bear fruit as we continue to "grow by means of believing the truth" – that is the way to earn the three crowns of eternal reward.

(1) I want you to know what a great struggle I am engaging in on your behalf and on behalf of those in Laodicea and [on behalf of] as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, (2) [struggling] that your hearts may be encouraged, being instructed in love and into the entire treasury of [spiritual] understanding, confidently believed, so as to [possess] the full-knowledge (i.e., *epignosis*, "knowledge made real through faith") of the mystery of God the Father, [namely] Christ, (3) in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden.

Colossians 2:1-3

Christian spiritual maturity, when complete, is characterized by a full, deep understanding of Jesus Christ and our relationship with Him. Only by responding to the Spirit's illumination of the truth as we are correctly taught it brings us closer to Jesus Christ as we both accept that truth through believing it and then apply it faithfully to our daily walk with our dear Savior.

(9) Stop lying to each other, having put aside your "former person" (10) and having put on the "new" one which is being renewed for the purpose [of attaining] a full and obedient knowledge [of the truth] (*epignosis*), [so as to model yourselves] in the image of the One who created it.

Colossians 3:9-10

When we are born again, we are given a new (cleansed) heart. That, however, is not the end but rather the beginning of the Christian experience. As the verses above tell us, the renewing of our minds is not a once for all thing but rather is meant to be a continued and continual process with the goal of spiritual maturity, the edification of our inner person through hearing, learning and believing the truth. Only by storing up sufficient "truth believed" in our hearts are we capable of fulfilling the mandate of walking in a manner worthy of the Lord who bought us.

(1) The Spirit explicitly says that in the end times certain men will rebel from the faith, giving their allegiance [instead] to deceitful spirits and demonic doctrines. (2) With their own consciences seared away and speaking with the hypocrisy of men [who peddle] lies, (3) they will [instruct their victims] to refrain from marriage, and to keep away from certain foods – which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and fully understand (*epignosko*) the truth.

1st Timothy 4:1-3

In all times of pressure, and especially during the end times, resisting persuasive lies peddled by individuals and groups who falsely claim to be "of Christ" will require spiritual character and maturity, both of which are achieved only through accepting the Spirit's witness to the truth as it is substantively taught, receiving and holding onto that truth by faith – and applying it in the power of the Spirit.

Paul, a servant of God and [appointed] an apostle of Jesus Christ on account of the faith of the elect of God and their full-knowledge (*epignosis*, or "acceptance" through believing it) of the truth which accords with godliness (i.e., living as Jesus would have us to live).

Titus 1:1

Here Paul summarizes his entire purpose as an apostle as the communication of God's truth to be accepted by believers in faith (so that this truth may become "full-knowledge" or *epignosis* in our hearts), to the end that we may walk in all godliness, behaving as mature believers in Jesus Christ, filled with the Holy Spirit, to His honor and our good witness in the world.

[I pray] that as you put your faith [in the truth] just as we do that this joint fellowship in [believing] the truth may empower you in your full acceptance and understanding (*epignosis*) by faith of [the truth of] every good thing we have [been given] for the cause of Christ.

Philemon 1:6

Faith in the truth, *epignosis* in the heart through the Spirit's teaching ministry (which illuminates the teaching ministries in the Church empowered by the Spirit), is the basis of all true Christian fellowship. Here Paul prays for Philemon (and for us all) that this process, well-begun, may continue until we have a complete and full understanding of everything God has given us to the end of Christ's glorification: this is completely fulfilled when we not only gain spiritual

maturity, but also pass the testing that comes the way of the mature, and, finally, come into the full production Christ has for us according the specific spiritual gifts with which we have been blessed by the Holy Spirit.

(2) May [God's] grace to you and [His] peace be multiplied by means of the full-knowledge (*epignosis*: truth believed) of God and our Lord Jesus, (3) inasmuch as His divine power has bestowed upon us [every]thing we need for life and to live in a godly way (i.e., physical and spiritual provision) through this full-knowledge (*epignosis*) of Him who has called us for His own glory and renown. 2nd Peter 1:2-3 (cf. 2Pet.1:8)

Peter testifies that the means of accessing God's grace and peace, that is, His favor and complete provision, is *epignosis*, for this is the means by which everything we need for this life, spiritual and physical, is provided to believers. Thus, to fulfill the purpose for which we have been called – to glorify God – every believer must commit him/herself to the process of spiritual growth, the only way that *epignosis* can be attained. Full-understanding of the truth requires that we seek out the truth (a good teaching ministry), hear, learn, and most especially **believe** the truth (for only through faith in the power of the Spirit is knowledge transformed into "full knowledge). That is the path to spiritual maturity, progress and production, the proper Christian walk wherein God's "grace and peace" are "multiplied".

For if these (i.e., the virtues of vv.5-7) be in your possession and increasing, they will render you neither unfit nor unproductive in regard to the full-knowledge (*epignosis*) of our Lord Jesus Christ [which you have received]. 2nd Peter 1:8

Walking worthily of Jesus Christ and producing for Him an acceptable spiritual crop are the proper counterparts of spiritual maturity, defined here by Peter as full-knowledge (*epignosis*). The list of virtues he provides in verses five through seven, faith, morality, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, love of the brethren, *agape*-love (the preeminent virtue of love towards all), are both a function of the spiritual growth which stems from *epignosis*, truth believed and acted upon, and a fitting response to that truth stored up in the believers heart through proper response to the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit (cf. 2Pet.1:2-3 treated immediately above).

**Conclusion:** The Holy Spirit is our link between the human and the divine, the One who bridges the gap between the physical world we see and the metaphysical truth of God which no one can understand or receive without the intervention of God Himself. The Spirit is the One who "bears witness to our spirit" to communicate (Rom.8:16). He is our Teacher (Jn.14:26). He is the One who makes the gospel real to us that we may be born again, and, having been spiritually reborn, who thereafter makes it possible for us to understand all of the truth given to us by our Savior Jesus Christ to the end of our spiritual growth, progress and production – when we are willing to accept that truth through faith.

(16) For [as scripture says] "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Who will instruct Him?" But we do have the very thinking (lit., "mind") of Christ (i.e., His truth taught by the Spirit).

1st Corinthians 2:16

This process of growing closer to Jesus Christ through His truth under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit is not an automatic one. The believer must seek out the truth, and, once a genuine source is found, commit to hearing, learning and believing that truth – so as to grow, progress and produce in the Spirit to the glory of our dear Lord and Savior.

Now grow up through the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

2nd Peter 3:18

### (3) Walking in the Spirit (Spiritual Progress)

Walking in a godly way in this world, something which ought to characterize the mature believer who has grown up fully through the process described in the previous section, is something to which all believers should aspire at all times, regardless of their level of spiritual growth. Spiritual growth, the consistent taking in of the truth of the Word of God until we "attain to that standard of maturity whose attainment is defined by Christ" (Eph.4:13), is our first and fundamental response to the Spirit following salvation, because it lays the groundwork for all future response: our walk through this world in a manner well-pleasing to our Savior, passing all the tests that come our way, and entering into the ministries Jesus Christ has for us in accord with the gifts which the Spirit has given us.

Our willingness to accept the Spirit's leadership in all things great and small is the key factor both in our spiritual growth and in our progress thereafter. Our ability to hear the Spirit's "still, small voice" (1Kng.19:12) is something that develops as we grow in the Lord. As we learn and believe the truth, our consciences become carefully calibrated to the Word of God and thus more sensitive to the prodding of the Spirit; at the same time the truth in our hearts renders them ever more sensitive to the Spirit's direction as we evaluate the circumstances with which life presents us. Therefore, a good Christian walk with our Lord in the power of the Spirit requires three things: 1) an extensive store of truth in the heart, expanding day by day as we continue with our life-long commitment to grow and know all we can about the truth; 2) a continued willingness to respond to the Spirit in seeking out, hearing, learning and believing the truth; 3) a consistent willingness to respond to the Spirit as He uses the truth we have learned and believed to direct our paths, turning us from everything bad through His ministry to our consciences as they have been refined and informed by the truth, and leading us into all things good through the mature perceptiveness of our hearts informed by that same truth.

The mechanics and applications of the Christian walk are properly the province of the next study, Bible Basics 6A: Peripateology. Because of the Spirit's critical role in this process, however, a discussion of His role in guiding and supporting the believer in our walk with Jesus Christ is appropriate here.

(a) Guidance of the Spirit:

The issue of the Spirit's guidance of the believer has already been discussed above in general terms (in section II.B.3.b.1, "Fellowship and the Filling of the Spirit: Responding to the Spirit"). There, we defined the filling of the Spirit as "being effectively influenced by the Holy Spirit who indwells him/her", and we noted that the command to "be filled with the Spirit" is thus fulfilled by 1) growing spiritually over time, and 2) making oneself available to the Spirit in our step by step walk with Christ through submitting to His will; the result is effective guidance, also called being "led by the Spirit".

One of the main things we need to understand about the guidance and empowerment of the Holy Spirit is that there are always several factors involved. First, all believers have the indwelling of the Spirit to aid us in our perception, appreciation, and application of God's truth. Secondly, no two believers are ever at precisely the same point in their spiritual growth. Thirdly, every believer's level of responsiveness to the Spirit is variable, often moment to moment. Spirituality, the intensity of the "filling of the Spirit" we experience at any given moment, depends therefore on how these three factors come together for any believer in any situation.

To use an analogy, we may compare the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to the power-plant which generates the "electricity" to power the believer's walk with Jesus Christ. Carrying that electricity requires wire (which stands in this analogy for the truth that the believer has stored in his/her heart); the more wire connections, the greater the capacity to carry electrical power. But even that does not tell the whole story. We can force relatively more voltage down a limited number of wires – although the actual amount will have an upward limit – and even if we have a large amount of connections, we may not admit as much voltage in as we are capable of doing. That is to say, even a relatively immature believer can have spiritual successes through great responsiveness to the Spirit's prodding; while even a relatively mature believer may limit him/herself in this regard through reluctance to respond. By and large, however, the greater the capacity, the greater the response in the long run; that is because great capacity and responsiveness go hand in hand (so that if capacity is not being used the result is generally spiritual regression and loss of said capacity), while on the other hand if a new believer truly is highly responsive to the Holy Spirit, much new capacity will be laid on, and quickly too.

One of the main points to derive from this analogy is that while the Spirit's ministry is absolute, empowering in every way and not limiting in any way, believers are often self-limited, both in the long run in our reluctance to be

consistent in responding to the Spirit's insistence that we learn and believe the truth (so as to lay on more spiritual capacity), and also in our moment by moment response to His prompting and restraining whenever we are reluctant to follow His lead enthusiastically (whether in engaging in things we should not do or refraining from things we should do). God provides the Spirit; God provides the truth; God provides the tests, circumstances and opportunities. But as with everything else of intrinsic importance in this life, divine guidance is all about our free-will response to it, both over time and through time, touching our habits and also our actions and reactions. If we wish to be fully Spirit-filled believers in the genuine New Testament sense, there is nothing else for it but to respond consistently to the Spirit in growth (to lay on ever more capacity) and also in our daily walk (making use of what capacity we do have to its full capacity in responding to all of His guidance and leadership).

For as many as are being led by the Spirit of God, these are the [true] sons of God.  
Romans 8:14

As this verse demonstrates, in the case of genuine believers, the Spirit leads, and we follow. But how does He lead, and how are we to follow? The answer is that the Spirit leads us through our understanding of the truth of the Word, and we follow by giving ourselves over to be willing to follow the guidance it contains, both in terms of clear principles set out in straightforward manner in scripture, but also in more subjective areas. In the latter, it is the Spirit who helps us to distinguish between good and evil (cf. Gen.2:9), between profitable and unprofitable, and it is He who speaks to our consciences to help us turn from the latter and embrace the former.

(16) But I tell you, walk in the Spirit and you will not carry out what the flesh lusts for. (17) For what the flesh lusts for is contrary to the Spirit's will, and the Spirit is opposed to what the flesh lusts for. Since these are diametrically opposed to each other in this way, what you are doing is not what you yourself choose. (18) But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. (19) The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; (20) idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; (21) drunkenness, orgies – and whatever is similar to all these things. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of heaven. (22) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, uprightness, faith, (23) humility, self-control. Against such things, there is no Law. (24) Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its weaknesses and its lusts. (25) If we live because of the Spirit, let us also walk by means of the Spirit.

Galatians 5:16-25

In the passage above, Paul gives us both guide-posts, the negative group of statutes and the positive group of virtues and virtuous actions. On the one hand, there are clearly sinful acts which any Christian who has attained any degree of spiritual maturity will recognize as such with no trouble. Committing any of the

sins in the list of "works of the flesh" given above, be they overt actions, verbal offenses, or mental violations of God's will, clearly constitutes a failure to follow the Spirit's lead. On the other hand, the examples of the "fruit of the Spirit" given above are equally easy to discern as God's will. In other words, we know what to do and what not to do, both in specific terms (as outlined definitively in scripture), but also in more flexible terms: genuinely acting out of "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, uprightness, faith, humility, self-control" will always be a positive response to the Spirit's guidance.

How, then, does the Spirit accomplish this guidance? He does so through the truth we have in our hearts, helping us to remember it, to value it, and to act on it, and prodding our consciences when we do not. He advises; but we have to take His advice. He encourages; but we have to respond to that encouragement. He leads, but it is our task to follow. And He will not force us to do so. Our part is to reject the leadership of the flesh, set on fire by everything seen and heard in the world and fanned into flame by the devil and his forces, and instead give our allegiance in all things great and small to the Spirit as our Leader, cleaving to the virtues which we know from our study of scripture and our belief in its truths are good and right and acceptable to the Lord, and rebuffing the temptations our flesh yearns to embrace. As Paul assures us above, we will always be doing one or the other. Walking "by means of the Spirit" thus entails not only resisting the bad through His help in identifying it, but also embracing the good through His encouragement to pursue it. The truths in our heart which help us distinguish these things coupled with the Spirit's active intercession with our consciences whenever we are forming a decision are the essence of His guidance. Our part is to respond positively.

It is important to note, while there have been in the past recorded cases of the Spirit speaking verbally and audibly to believers (e.g., Lk.2:27; 4:1; Acts 8:29; 10:19; 11:28; 13:2-4), ours is the dispensation of the Spirit's provision of the truth from the scripture much more than through tangibly miraculous means. Closely related to this principle, it is therefore important not to mistake emotion for the Spirit's guidance – as even one of the greatest believers, the apostle Paul, once did (compare Acts 20:22-23 with Acts 21:4; 21:11). As those indwelt by the Holy Spirit, we have the blessing of His "still, small voice" to guide us (1Kng.19:12), but that voice is the "mind of Christ", the Bible, its truths in our heart being illuminated and made perspicuous and powerful to us through His ministry.

I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit.

Romans 9:1 NIV

Here we see a clear example of the guidance of the Spirit prompting the apostle Paul to speak these words. First, and very importantly, Paul is aware of the Spirit's presence and readiness to help, and we would all do well to emulate this awareness as a way of remembering that God is present and well-able to give us direction if we are willing to rely on Him rather than leaning on our own



understanding (Prov.3:5). Secondly, the apostle's conscience, built up and refined through years of learning and believing the truth, acts to confirm the witness he feels from the Spirit. This witness, it is critical to add, consists of the truth Paul has learned and believed which the Spirit brings to his remembrance and understanding. Finally, Paul speaks what he knows to be the truth, his application in response to the Spirit, a response which he is very much willing to give. This is the essence of divine guidance through the Spirit: 1) a strong conscience formed and correctly calibrated to divine standards through long exposure to the truth; 2) an abundant store of truth in the heart which the conscience tests to separate divine principles from mere emotion; 3) the ministry of the Spirit in empowering and motivating this process of discernment; and 4) our willingness to engage in this process **at every stage**. This last point is crucial to keep in mind. For if we are unwilling to be reformed in our consciences and to build up a large residual of truth in our hearts by hearing, learning and believing the truth day by day, then the Spirit will have little to work with; also, whenever we are unwilling to respond to the Spirit's guidance in this process at any particular time, the potential of being effectively guided will be lost – at least in that instance. Readers recalling our discussion of the filling of the Spirit above (section II.B.3.b.1.a) will not be surprised to learn now that guidance and filling are essentially synonymous, the former emphasizing the Spirit's leadership and our response, the latter emphasizing the dominance of the Spirit in superintending our will whenever we are willing to let Him do so – and that both synonymous processes require our acceptance and obedience to the truth, both diachronically (spiritual growth over time), and synchronically (willingness to obey the truth as the Spirit witnesses to it at all times).

For the Word of God is living and powerful; it is sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even to the point of being able to divide the spirit from its earthly life and the marrow from its bones; [for] it (i.e., the Word when resident in our conscience empowered by the Spirit) acts as a judge of our heart's intentions and emotions.

Hebrews 4:12

For proper discernment of the situations we come across in our Christian walk – the essence of appropriating the Spirit's guidance – we need truth laid up in our hearts in order for the Spirit to have the opportunity of using it in guiding us (as the verse above teaches so clearly). We need that truth to have been believed, and we need to have confidence in it. Further, the depth of our faith, the degree to which we really do believe the truth, is also key. For the Spirit's ministry of guiding us to be at its most effective, we need a well-developed conscience which is calibrated and attuned to the truth as closely as possible so as to help us discern aright what it is right for us to do in each and every case. The Spirit helps us in all these things, but He still leaves the decisions to us. He builds up our norms and standards with the truth of the Word and gives us an increasing capacity to discern truth from emotion as we grow, but we have to respond correctly. Ignoring our consciences (as opposed to ignoring emotional signals) weakens them. We have to put together the truth we have believed with an active

effort of discernment based upon our consciences and our will. And if we are willing, and if we have taken in and believed sufficient truth, and if we have given ourselves over to the Spirit for the building up of our discernment through this process over time, we will make increasing good judgment-calls and decisions as we progress in the Christian life – whenever we are willing to yield to the Spirit's will in following the truth rather than choosing our own ways. That does not mean we will ever be perfect, either in our discernment or our decision-making, even after we have achieved a high level of maturity. But it does mean that we will more quickly be able to sort out our mistakes – and our rash violations of our own standards – and then through confession and repentance be able thereafter all the more rapidly to recover the forward progress to which we have been called.

(1) Therefore I entreat you by God's mercy, brothers, to dedicate your bodies as a living sacrifice, well-pleasing to God – [this is] your "priestly-service" spiritually performed. (2) Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by this renewal of your thinking, so that you may discern what God's will for you is, namely what it is good, well-pleasing, and correct [for you to do].  
Romans 12:1-2 (cf. Rom.2:17-18)

(9) And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in full-knowledge and in all discernment, (10) so that you may be able to evaluate the things that are good and appropriate [for you to do] to be sincere and without offense in regard to the day of Christ (i.e., to gain a maximum reward at Christ's judgment seat), (11) full of the righteous production Jesus Christ [commends] to the glory and praise of God.  
Philippians 1:9-11

Solid [spiritual] food is for the [spiritually] mature, those who by [diligent] practice have trained their [moral] perceptive faculties to [properly] distinguish between good and evil.  
Hebrews 5:14

People often talk of common sense, a faculty most people possess which is both innate but also informed by basic life experiences, a faculty which helps us discern what is wise or unwise to do in secular terms. We may compare this to the Spirit's guidance of believers. All believers have the Spirit indwelling them, and this blessing is the foundation of all "spiritual common sense". The means which the Spirit uses to guide us, however, is His reminding us of the truth, and His aiding us in making sense of difficult judgment-call situations through weighing the various principles that apply (as in the three passages quoted directly above). Clearly, then, for this process of guidance to be effective, we have to be willing to accept the Spirit's prodding when He lays a principle of truth before us – and if we do not possess the necessary truth in our hearts, either through a failure to seek out the truth or a failure to believe it, to that degree His ministry will be limited in the precision of the guidance which may be extended to us – not because of any present deficiency on His part but because of deficiency in the past on our part. Simply put, the more we are willing to accept the Spirit's witness

to the truth in its first appearance to us as we avail ourselves of good teaching, then when we believe it, and later when it comes time to apply it, the more effective our "spiritual common sense" will be. But if we are unwilling to hear the truth in the first place, unwilling to believe it in the second, and finally unwilling to respond to the guiding ministry of the Spirit as He coaxes us to apply that truth to the life we are living, then we shall have acted just as foolishly as someone who violates basic principles of secular "common sense" (as in touching a hot stove or eating a bushel of green apples when the consequences are clear enough ahead of time).

(5) Those who are oriented to the flesh think about the things of the flesh, but those who are orientated to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. (6) For the thought-pattern of the flesh results in death, but the thought-pattern of the Spirit results in life and peace. (7) Now the thought-pattern of the flesh is [one of] enmity towards God, for it does not obey God's law, nor is it [even] able [to do so]. (8) And [so] those who are under the control of the flesh (i.e., unbelievers enslaved to the sin nature) are not able to please God. (9) But you are not under the control of the flesh, but under the control of the Spirit – if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, that person does not belong to Him.

Romans 8:5-9

As in Galatians 5:16-25 (discussed above), this passage describes obedience to the Spirit versus obedience to the flesh not only as polar opposites but also as the only two possible courses of actions for the believer in Jesus Christ. In this passage from Romans chapter eight, Paul describes "Spirit control" as the default position for the believer, so much so that anyone who belongs to Christ but who is not acting in response to the Spirit is "not able to please God" and appears more of an unbeliever than a believer. Now we know of a certainty from many other passages of scripture, many penned by Paul himself, that our security as believers in Jesus Christ is absolute – so long as we believe. However, the emphatic manner in which Paul puts these matters certainly does make the point that for a believer to act like an unbeliever – and that is what failure to follow the Spirit's guidance really is (as in Gal.5:16-25) – is unpleasing to God at best and spiritual very dangerous at worst (John makes a similar point in e.g. 1Jn.3:6-9; 5:18). Based upon our discussion above, moreover, we can say with assuredness that this Spirit control is not automatic (it requires our assent, both in the long term in giving ourselves over to the process of spiritual growth and also in the short term in responding to the Spirit's specific prompting whenever it comes). Paul's calling of our attention to the "thought-pattern" of the Spirit contrasted to the thinking of the flesh is a very clear representation of the conflicting divine and human points of view, the former gained and refined by attention to the truth, the latter ever present and omnipresent in the world, our flesh, and the propaganda of the devil. Our control by the Spirit (or, alternatively, by the flesh) is a matter of orientation – and that orientation is accomplished through our own free will in all things great and small, over time and at any given point in time. Nothing commanded and exhorted here is impossible for the believer to achieve, because

all believers have the Holy Spirit residing in them "to will and to do" (Phil.2:13) so as to be able to respond to Him and follow Him in order to carry out Christ's purpose for our lives: "And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, that person does not belong to Him" (Rom.8:9b).

(b) Motivation:

As many as are being led [forward] by the Spirit, these are the ones who are [truly] the sons of God.

Romans 8:14

For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

Philippians 2:13 NKJV

Since the Spirit's leadership of us depends upon our response to the truth, motivating us to follow Him closely is obviously an important part of the Spirit's indwelling ministry. We see that motivation provided by the Holy Spirit throughout scripture, expressed in a variety of ways.

(i) Encouragement:

But the Encourager, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My Name, that One will teach you all [the truth] and will remind you of all [the truth] which I spoke to you.

John 14:26

Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened (lit., "edified", i.e., built up through the truth). Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged [in this way] by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.

Acts 9:31 NIV

(16) For the Spirit Himself testifies to our spirit that we are God's children. (17) And if we are God's children, then we are also His heirs, even fellow heirs of Christ – that is if we have indeed suffered with Him so that we might also be glorified together with Him.

Romans 8:16-17

Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."

Galatians 4:6 NIV

Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

1st John 3:24 NKJV

By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.

1st John 4:13 NKJV

As can be seen from all of the passages above, teaching us the truth and reminding us of comforting truths that we have learned and believed is the means by which the Holy Spirit encourages us.

(ii) Hope:

The Holy Spirit empowers our hope, fueling it and focusing it when we are walking in response to Him and to the truth He has taught us:

(3) And not only this, but let us glory in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces patience, (4) and patience produces proven character, and proven character produces hope – (5) and this hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us (cf. 2Tim.1:7).

Romans 5:3-5

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:13 NKJV

But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope.

Galatians 5:5 NIV

Christian hope is the absolute certainty (as opposed to wishful thinking) that we will be resurrected when our Lord returns, and rewarded for what we have accomplished for the Lord in this life. The Spirit helps us to keep that eternal, reward-oriented perspective, so important to a proper and productive Christian walk (Heb.11:6; cf. Heb.11:26).

(iii) Joy:

Walking in the power of the Spirit, following Him and embracing the wondrous truths He has taught and brings to mind, is the ultimate font of all Christian joy:

And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

Acts 13:52 NKJV

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Romans 14:17 NIV

You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.

1st Thessalonians 1:6 NIV

(18) And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, (19) speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,

singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.  
Ephesians 5:19 NKJV

But this joy must be accessed through our own choice to follow, respond to, and contemplate the truths the Spirit has taught us:

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!  
Philippians 4:4 NIV

Rejoice at all times!  
1st Thessalonians 5:16

(iv) Love:

Christian love is the quintessential virtue, and therefore the main guide post of truth used by the Spirit to direct the responsive Christian's path (Rom.15:30; Col.1:8; 2Tim.1:7):

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, uprightness, faith, (23) humility, self-control. Against such things, there is no Law.  
Galatians 5:22-23

(3) And not only this, but let us glory in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces patience, (4) and patience produces proven character, and proven character produces hope – (5) and this hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us (cf. 2Tim.1:7).  
Romans 5:3-5

(v) Endurance:

Steadfastness under pressure is made possible by the Holy Spirit.

If you are indeed being reproached on account of Christ's name, you are truly blessed, for the Spirit of glory, even the Spirit of God, rests upon you (i.e., to support you in the trial).  
1st Peter 4:14

(vi) Fellowship with other believers:

The Holy Spirit promotes unity and fellowship between believers in the process of building up the Church of Jesus Christ (Eph.4:3-4; 1Jn.1:3).

(19) So then, you are no longer strangers and hangers-on, but you are fellow citizens and fellow members of the household of God, (20) established upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Himself the cornerstone, (21) in whom the entire structure is in the process of being joined together and is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, (22) in whom you too are being built up

into a dwelling place of God by the Spirit.  
Ephesians 2:19-22

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.  
Ephesians 4:3 NKJV

(1) If [you have] any comfort in Christ, if [you have] any encouragement from [God's] love, if [you have] any fellowship with the Spirit, if [you have] any sympathy and compassion [for fellow believers], (2) then make my joy full by being of one mind, of one love, of one heart, thinking the same thing, (3) doing nothing out of selfish competitiveness or self-importance, but in humility, considering each other as more important than yourselves, (4) with each of you looking out not for himself but for each other. (5) Have the [very same] attitude which also Christ Jesus did.

Philippians 2:1-5

(vii) Zeal:

The Spirit is the One who produces in us the fervent motivation to respond to, to follow, and to serve our Lord in this life:

In regard to your enthusiasm, do not be hesitant, but be boiling with the Spirit.  
Romans 12:11

Do not put out the Spirit's fire.  
1st Thessalonians 5:19

(c) Specific Empowerments:

(i) Prayer:

The Holy Spirit is pivotal in empowering every aspect of our prayer life.

(1) He intercedes on our behalf, producing the marvelous result that even when we don't know precisely what we should pray for or how, our prayers are heard nonetheless:

(26) And the Spirit helps us in our weakness in a similar way. For we do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us also with anguished supplications which words cannot express. (27) But He who searches our hearts (i.e., the Lord) knows what **the Spirit** is thinking, because He (i.e., the Spirit) **intercedes** with God on behalf of the saints (i.e., believers "sanctified" or made holy by the Spirit).

Romans 8:26-27

(2) He is the One who empowers the direct access we have to the Father's throne of grace in Jesus Christ our Lord:

For it is through Him[, Jesus Christ,] that we both have our access to the Father **by means of one Spirit.**

Ephesians 2:18

(3) He is the One who empowers us in the process of praying, when we pray in fellowship with the Lord, all our sins being forgiven through confession:

In all your prayers and petitions [be] praying **in the Spirit** on each occasion, keeping at this with all persistence and petition on behalf of the saints (i.e., believers "sanctified" or made holy by the Spirit).

Ephesians 6:18

(4) He is the One who provides the power to supply the response from the Lord as our prayers are answered:

For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and what **the Spirit** of Jesus Christ supplies [in response].

Philippians 1:19

(5) He is the One who provides us with spiritual safety as we pray in His power and continue our spiritual advance in Jesus Christ:

(20) But you, beloved, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith (i.e., spiritual growth) and by praying **in the Holy Spirit**, (21) keep yourselves safe in the love of God while you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ [to be fulfilled] unto life eternal (i.e., at the resurrection).

Jude 1:20-21

(ii) Worship:

All true worship of God is only completely in accordance with His will when done "in Spirit" (that is, in the Spirit's power) and "in truth" (that is, responding to, celebrating, and being conducted in accordance with the truth of the Word of God).

(23) But the hour is coming, and in fact has already arrived, when the true worshipers [of God] will worship the Father in spirit (i.e., spiritually: our spirit responding to His Spirit) and in truth (i.e., truthfully: our heart responding to His truth). Indeed, it is just such worshipers that the Father is seeking. (24) For God is spirit, and those who worship Him must do so spiritually (lit., in spirit) and truthfully (lit., in truth).

John 4:23-24

Biblically speaking, "worship" (Greek: *proskyneō*), etymologically to "send kisses towards") involves all legitimate responses of the believer to the Lord wherein we express our gratitude to Him and our appreciation of Him and what He has done for us. That is to say, we are involved in biblical worship any time we acknowledge Him and His grace towards us, whether individually or collectively, and by whatever legitimate means, be it praise, song, or even a simple heart-felt



prayer of thanksgiving offered by an individual believer alone. The verses quoted directly above teach that it is neither the form nor the venue which is important. After all, our Lord's contemporaries, though "worshiping" in the temple in rituals more or less prescribed in the Law, were doing so neither "in Spirit" nor "in truth" – since most of them were not even believers. Likewise for believers today, neither rituals nor demonstrations of emotional excess, no matter how dramatically orchestrated, mean anything to the Lord. If no genuine biblical worship is to be found in an otherwise impressive group experience, then such a meeting runs the risk of doing "more harm than good" (1Cor.11:17), whereas the actual purpose of Christian group meetings is mutual edification through the Word, along with the mutual encouragement that comes to those who are helping each other advance spiritually in this way (Heb.10:25). That is the only type of situation where one is likely to find the stipulation of our Lord in John 4:23-24 being carried out properly, "in Spirit and in truth".

(iii) Sanctification:

As we have seen in the past and covered briefly above, sanctification in the Plan of God is the threefold process wherein a person is set apart to God, removed from the realm of the profane and entered into the realm of the holy, from the power of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son (Col.1:13). The first phase, salvation, enters the new believer into union with Christ; we become "one with Him", holy, sanctified, "saints" by way of our position in Jesus (Rom.1:7; 16:2; 1Cor.1:2; 1:30; 6:11; Eph.3:18). After salvation, the process of sanctification continues as we draw ever closer to God and farther away from the world and its sinfulness through our adherence to the truth of the Word, becoming more like our Savior in terms of our behavior as we mature spiritually (Rom.6:19-22; Eph.4:12; 5:3; 1Thes.4:3-7; Heb.10:14; 12:14). The final phase of sanctification will occur for us at the resurrection when in perfect, eternal bodies we shall be perfect and perfectly sanctified and holy in every way, without sin forevermore (Jn.17:19; Acts 20:32; Eph.1:18; Col.1:12; 1Thes.3:13; 2Thes.2:1-10; Rev.11:18).

(3) Now this is God's will, namely, your **sanctification** (i.e., separation from sin). [He desires you] to keep away from immorality, (4) and for each of you to know how to keep his [or her] own vessel (i.e., body) under control in sanctification and honorable conduct, (6) not [giving in] to the passions of lust as do the gentiles (i.e., unbelievers) who do not know God, (7) so that you may not transgress and thereby take advantage of your brother/sister [in Christ]. For the Lord is an Avenger of all these sins as I have warned and have born solemn witness to you before. For God did not call you to uncleanness but in sanctification.

1st Thessalonians 4:3-7

We have already mentioned the Spirit's work in sanctifying believers as God's temple wherein the Spirit dwells (see section II.B.2.b.2.g above), and sanctification in time (phase two) is likewise a provision of the Spirit. However, while our positional sanctification (being set apart for Christ by the Spirit) and

our ultimate sanctification (being made holy forever in resurrection) are "automatic", temporal sanctification is a process that depends upon our spiritual forward progress on the one hand and on our willingness to follow the Spirit's guidance in separating ourselves from sinfulness on the other.

Therefore, my beloved, possessing such promises as these, let us cleanse ourselves from every pollution of body and spirit, perfecting our sanctification in the fear of God.

2nd Corinthians 7:1

The Spirit, being the "Spirit of Holiness" (Rom.1:4), is the One concerned with helping believers stay separate, apart and sanctified from sin in a holy way (cf. Rom.6:19-22; 2Cor.7:1; Eph.5:23-25; 1Thes.3:12-13; 2Thes.4:3-7; 2Tim.1:9; Heb.12:10; 1Jn.3:3; Rev.22:11).

Pursue peace with everyone, and sanctification, without which no one will see the Lord.

Hebrews 12:14

But just as He who has called you is holy, you too should be entirely holy in your behavior. For the scripture says: Be holy, for I am holy.

1st Peter 1:15-16

The Holy Spirit aids us in this important process of perfecting holiness or "pursuing sanctification" in three major ways:

#### (1) Spiritual Growth:

For the one whose sowing is directed to his own [sinful] flesh from that [sinful] flesh will reap corruption, but the one whose sowing is directed toward the Spirit, from that [same] Spirit will reap eternal life.

Galatians 6:8

As we both grow in the truth and also progress in our walk with Jesus Christ and production for Him, we come more and more to respond to the Spirit and to reject the temptations which our sin natures in conjunction with the world around us and its evil ruler are ever proffering. The more truth we have in our hearts by faith and through response to the teaching the Spirit leads us to, the more resources we have to combat the assaults of the evil one and his ally on our inside, the sin nature. While we will never be perfect this side of the resurrection, spiritual growth is the best way to advance sanctification, simply because as in all things a good defense is never ultimately effective in the absence of a correspondingly effective offense: when it comes to our behavior, we have to change on the inside in order for outward, apparent change to be real and lasting (merely seeming to be sanctified on the outside is not at all what our Lord desires from us any more than it was in the case of the Pharisees). Spiritual growth is the Spirit's realm as is sanctification, and the two always go hand in hand (in a correct Christian walk).

## (2) Filling:

And don't get drunk with wine – which is dissipating – but instead keep on being full-filled (i.e., making progress in spiritual growth) by means of the Holy Spirit (i.e., the means to edification in contrast to dissipation).

Ephesians 5:18

While spiritual growth produces a gradually increasing base of maturity and sensitivity to the will of God, filling represents the moment by moment state of the believer in responding to our Lord. As growth gives us a history of success, along with better patterns of behavior overall based upon a closer relationship to Jesus Christ through attention to the truth of His Word, filling is the Spirit's moment by moment empowerment and direction of us. If we respond positively at any given time, we will be "pursuing sanctification" and manifesting holiness as our Lord commands.

(16) But I tell you, walk in the Spirit and you will not carry out what the flesh lusts for. (17) For what the flesh lusts for is contrary to the Spirit's will, and the Spirit is opposed to what the flesh lusts for. Since these are diametrically opposed to each other in this way, what you are doing is not what you yourself choose.

Galatians 5:16-17

Just as spiritual growth may not be an uninterrupted upward line (imperfect beings that we are, even the best of us will have setbacks), so we should not imagine that our record will be perfect in responding to the Spirit so as to be filled up with His influence through our positive response to His guidance at all times. We will fail (Jas.3:2). We will sin (Rom.3:23). Blessedly, God forgives (Ps.103:2-13), so that when we confess our sins, we are restored again to full fellowship with our Lord and Master (1Jn.1:9), and any discipline that comes our way as a result will be that of a loving Father bestowed for good on the sons and daughters He loves with all His heart (Heb.12:4-13).

## (3) Conscience:

No one who has been born of God continues in [a life of] sin, since His seed (i.e., the Word of truth in which we believe) remains in him, and [so] he is not able to continue in [a life of] sin since he has been born of God.

1st John 3:9

Our consciences as believers are enlightened by the Word of God – the seed of the gospel and all of its truths – and empowered by the Spirit. As long as these remain in us, there is resistance against sin just as we are drawn toward righteousness. Our consciences thus make it impossible for us to resist forever the truth and the testimony of the Spirit and give ourselves over to a life of sin – without being internally torn apart (with the resulting tension eventually being resolved by repentance, apostasy, or the sin unto death). That is why most believers do, like the prodigal son, rebound from spiritual defeat through repentance and confession. And the more willing we are to respond, the more the

conscience enlightened (by the Word) and empowered (by the Spirit) becomes an ever more reliable guide for navigating even the disputable matters of life which every believer must negotiate:

(1) Therefore I entreat you by God's mercy, brothers, to dedicate your bodies as a living sacrifice, well-pleasing to God – [this is] your "priestly-service" spiritually performed. (2) Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by this renewal of your thinking, so that you may **discern** what God's will for you is, namely what it is good, well-pleasing, and correct [for you to do].

Romans 12:1-2

(9) And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in full-knowledge (*epignosis*: truth believed) and in all **discernment**, (10) so that you may be able to **evaluate** the things that are good and appropriate [for you to do] to be sincere and without offense in regard to the day of Christ (i.e., to gain a maximum reward at Christ's judgment seat), (11) full of the righteous production Jesus Christ [commends] to the glory and praise of God.

Philippians 1:9-11

Solid [spiritual] food is for the [spiritually] mature, those who by [diligent] practice have trained their [moral] perceptive faculties to [properly] **distinguish** between good and evil.

Hebrews 5:14

### c. Security of the Believer:

(18) For by pouring forth [statements] of outrageous folly, [by appealing to] fleshly lusts, and by making use of every [sort of] sensuality, [these false teachers] entice those who [previously] had truly escaped from those who live [such] lives of deception (i.e., the false teachers). (19) [These false teachers] promise [weak believers] freedom [from a disciplined life], though they themselves are truly slaves of corruption. For by what[ever] one is mastered (i.e., the victims of false teaching – who are the center of discussion from here on in), to this is he enslaved. (20) For if after having escaped the defilements of this world by recognizing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ [these weak believers] should be overcome [spiritually] by becoming involved again in these foul things, then they have become worse off than they were before. (21) For it would have been better for them not to have accepted the Righteous Way in the first place, rather than – once having accepted this holy command [for faith in Christ which was] committed to them – to turn their backs on it now. (22) And so in their case this proverb is true: "The dog has returned to his vomit, and the sow, though washed, to her muddy sty".

2nd Peter 2:18-22

Short of "breaking all bounds" (Hos.4:2), and engulfing oneself in complete apostasy as in the example above, the security of the believer is indeed absolutely secure, and "no one can snatch" us out of the hands of the Father and the Son (Jn.10:28-29). As He whose province is restraint of evil on the one hand (outward

protection for the believer) and sanctification from evil on the other (inward protection for the believer), it should come as no surprise that the Spirit is associated with many of the scriptural representations which teach the security we have as those who are now part of the Bride of Jesus Christ:

(1) Pledge:

(21) Now the One who has given us security in regard to Christ together with you and who has anointed us (i.e., with the Spirit) is God – (22) [Yes, He] has also sealed us and given us His **pledge** of the Spirit in our hearts.

2nd Corinthians 1:21-22

And it is God [the Father] who has fashioned us for this very purpose [of resurrection and eternal life], and it is He who has given us the **pledge** of the Spirit [to guarantee that eternal future].

2nd Corinthians 5:5

(13) In [Christ] you also when you heard the Word of truth, the good news of your salvation, in whom [I say], when you believed, you were sealed by the Spirit of promise, the Holy [Spirit], (14) who is a **pledge** of our inheritance for redeeming its preservation (i.e., safeguarding our resurrection and reward in every way), for the purpose of the praise of His glory (in eternity).

Ephesians 1:13-14

The Holy Spirit is our deposit from the Lord, our pledge from Him, our guarantee, a tangible blessing which we possess and in which we delight that reminds of the security we have as those who belong to Jesus Christ. If ever doubts and troubles begin to overwhelm us, the blessed truth that we have the Spirit is absolute confirmation that we still belong to Him.

(2) Firstfruits:

(23) And not only the created world, but we too who have received the Holy Spirit as a foretaste [of the good things to come] agonize within ourselves as we eagerly await our adoption, that is, the redemption of our body (i.e. resurrection). (24) This is the hope with which we were saved.

Romans 8:23-24a

The Spirit is the "firstfruits" (Greek *aparche*), the harbinger or foretaste of all the good things to come in eternity, first and foremost the resurrection body in which we shall enjoy eternity with one another and with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the New Jerusalem. Just as the Spirit indwells our present corruptible bodies, so He will be the One through whom we are resurrected – and His present presence is a guarantee of that future blessed hope being realized when our Lord returns:

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through

His Spirit who dwells in you.  
Romans 8:11 NASB

(3) Sealing:

(21) Now the One who has given us security in regard to Christ together with you and who has anointed us (i.e., with the Spirit) is God – (22) [Yes, He] has also **sealed** us and given us His pledge of the Spirit in our hearts.  
2nd Corinthians 1:21-22

(13) In [Christ] you also when you heard the Word of truth, the good news of your salvation, in whom [I say], when you believed, you were **sealed** by the Spirit of promise, the Holy [Spirit], (14) who is a pledge of our inheritance for redeeming its preservation (i.e., safeguarding our resurrection and reward in every way), for the purpose of the praise of His glory (in eternity).  
Ephesians 1:13-14

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God with whom you were **sealed** for a [future] day of redemption (i.e., the day of resurrection).  
Ephesians 4:30

The Holy Spirit constitutes also a special "seal" of God, communicating to all and sundry that we belong to Him. Just as the special sealing of the 144,000 in Revelation chapter seven is done to grant them a special measure of protection, so the seal of God which all who have His Spirit within them possess represents His special protection of us. No one can harm a believer in any way, save with the permission of the Lord who bought us, for we are His special treasure and possession for all time, and the Spirit's sealing of us demonstrates that fact. This truth then should be a point of special encouragement to every believer in Christ, reminding us that, even in hard and difficult times, our Lord is working everything out for the absolute good (Rom.8:28), and that the Spirit will prevent any harm befalling us which is not part of the express will of God.

(4) Adoption:

(15) For you have not received a spirit of slavery [leading you] back to [a state of] fear [of damnation], but you have the Spirit who has entered you into God's family (lit. "of adoption"; Gk., *huiiothesia*, "placement-as-a-son"), in whom we cry, "Abba! My Father!" (16) For the Spirit Himself testifies to our spirit that we are God's children. (17) And if we are God's children, then we are also His heirs, even fellow heirs of Christ – that is if we have indeed suffered with Him so that we might also be glorified together with Him.  
Romans 8:15-17

Finally, the Spirit is also the Agent of adoption, the One who has entered us into God's family and the One who makes the truth our special relationship to the Father and the Son crystal clear in our hearts. As sons and daughters of God Almighty, fellow heirs of Jesus Christ our Lord, we can be absolutely sure of the

security we have in Him through the Holy Spirit. God does not abandon His children (Matt.18:12-14; Lk.15:21-24).

d. Ministry of the Believer:

To begin, it is important to remember that all legitimate Christian ministry is only possible because of the Holy Spirit: in addition to the spiritual gifts He gives, their proper function, empowerment, and effectiveness are all the result of His efforts on behalf of the Body of Christ:

I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong.

Romans 1:11 NIV

For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh.

Philippians 3:3 NIV

You are our letter of recommendation, written on your hearts, read and understood by everyone, that everyone might know that you are Christ's letter, ministered to by us, not inscribed with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not written on tablets of stone, but on the living tablets of your hearts.

2nd Corinthians 3:2-3

(1) Spiritual Gifts:

While the New Testament has much to say about spiritual gifts, there is much more we should like to have spelled out for us, and that is particularly true on two points: 1) the precise characteristics of the gifts, especially those about which little is said ("wisdom" and "knowledge", for example); 2) the precise parameters of the so-called "sign gifts" (such as "tongues", "miracles", "healing" and "prophecy") – in particular whether or not and when and why they came to be discontinued.

The concerns entailed in the first question are, as it happens, not as important as may seem to be the case at first glance – in fact, this is an instance where more information might actually result in less clarity. That is because, although there are several lists and a number of additional references to various gifts throughout the epistles, it is not the case that any given Christian's value or first-best role in the system of mutual support which ideally constitutes the function of the Body of Christ can be comprehended by pigeonholing that believer and his/her talents under the rubric of a given gift (however widely or narrowly that gift be defined). That is so for a variety of reasons. First, the very fact that all of the lists of spiritual gifts given in scripture are different is a clear indication that we are not necessarily to take these lists as being all-encompassing. Secondly, the very fact that the area of operation and the characteristics of the individual gifts are never closely defined guarantees that each one of them covers a wide range of possibilities in terms of just what it may be that the specific gift empowers its

possessor to do for Christ's Church. Thirdly, it is this author's firm conviction from the way these things are stated in scripture where these matters are discussed, that while (clearly) not every believer possesses every gift (1Cor.12:28-31), that many (if not most) possess more than one. Finally, no two Christians will ever be at precisely the same place in their spiritual growth, have the same physical and mental talents, characteristics and personalities, nor find themselves in the same cultural, historical and geographical situations.

The net effect of these truths is a Church composed not of believers regimented into a dozen or so neat little categories but a Body composed of members possessing an infinite variety of capabilities, perfectly tailored by the Spirit for the particular circumstances of the needs of the Church. Given this reality, becoming overly fixated on identifying one's particular gift (to the exclusion of others which might also be in the individual believer's possession), could be a stultifying exercise, especially if it is assumed that the particular gift in question fits in with arbitrarily assumed descriptive parameters like a glove – which, functionally, would operate more like a straight-jacket. Just as the truth about local church polity from a biblical perspective is that the New Testament teaches flexibility of organization (whereas decreeing arbitrary interpretations of scripture as mandatory has led to dysfunction in every formal denomination), so also the truth about spiritual gifts is that they more resemble a rainbow than they do a small list of carefully segregated primary colors.

All this is not to say that knowledge of what the Bible has to say about spiritual gifts, both collectively and in terms of the information to be gleaned about individual gifts, is not important – indeed it is very important, and we shall in the following section attempt to explore everything the Bible does actually have to say on the subject. But it does mean that the knowledge imparted by scripture is meant to aid and to empower us in the implementation of all of our individual talents, opportunities, and, yes, spiritual gifts for the sake of the edification of the Church of Christ (the true purpose of all gifts), not to make us more reluctant to serve because we are not able to identify with precision the exact "cocktail" of gifts and talents the Spirit of God and the Plan of God have separately bequeathed us. We may be sure that our Lord is eager for us to make use of all we have been given to do our part for the building up of His Body through the truth of the Word and every legitimate ministry which supports that process of mutual spiritual growth; our part is to respond to Him through personal spiritual growth, progress and production, all of which things require our willingness to respond to the Spirit (whether or not we have identified and defined our own particular set of gifts with precise specificity – or ever will):

(19) So then, you are no longer strangers and hangers-on, but you are fellow citizens and fellow members of the household of God, (20) established upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Himself the cornerstone, (21) in whom the entire structure is in the process of being joined together and is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, (22) in whom you too are being built up



into a dwelling place of God by the Spirit.  
Ephesians 2:19-22

(15) . . . that we may, by embracing the truth in love, grow up in all respects with Christ, who is the head of the Church, as our model. (16) In this way, the entire body of the Church, fit and joined together by Him through the sinews He powerfully supplies to each and every part, works out its own growth for the building up of itself in love.  
Ephesians 4:15-16

. . . from whom[, Jesus Christ,] the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.  
Colossians 2:19b NIV

As the verses above demonstrate pellucidly, God empowers the mutual growth of the Body of Christ, but each member has a unique role to play in that growth. We believers are all a valuable and essential part of the potential growth of Christ's Church, each and every one, and no two of us will be gifted, talented and positioned in the Plan of God to do so in precisely the same way; yet the full potential Christ desires will only be achieved if we all do contribute in the way in which our Lord intends.

(7) And **to each of us** this grace has been given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. (8) For it says, "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive (i.e., He brought pre-cross believers to heaven). **He gave gifts to men.**" (9) Now [as to] this [phrase] "He ascended", what can it mean except that He had also [previously] descended into the lower reaches of the earth (i.e., Hades, from whence He brought the pre-cross believers to heaven)? (10) The One who descended is also the One who ascended above all the heavens (i.e., into the third heaven, the place of the Father's residence), in order to fulfill all things (i.e., complete the victory won at the cross; cf. Ps.110:1).  
Ephesians 4:7-10

This passage teaches that the gift of the Spirit generally and the additional gifts each believer receives at salvation with the baptism of the Spirit are based upon Christ's victory at the cross and its official recognition by the Father when He ascended (cf. Acts 2:33), was seated with the Father, and regained "the glory I had with you since before the beginning of the world" (Jn.17:5). As Christ's representatives on earth, we have all been specially gifted as well as empowered to carry out the particular mission or ministry our Lord has for us, His "Church militant".

(4) There are different gifts, but the same Spirit; (5) and there are different ministries, but the same Lord (i.e., Jesus Christ); (6) and there are different results, but the same God who brings about all results in all cases. (7) And to every [Christian] has been given a manifestation of the Spirit for the good (i.e.,

the edification of the Church).  
1st Corinthians 12:4-7

This and other passages (cf. 1Cor.1:7; 14:1; 14:12; Heb.2:4), moreover, make clear that it is the Holy Spirit, who, at the point when we become believers and are baptized into Christ and become indwelt by the Spirit, distributes spiritual gift – which is to be expected when we consider that the indwelling of the Spirit itself is a gift (Acts 2:38; 8:20; 10:45; 11:17; cf. Acts 1:4), which can only be given based upon the Gift of Gifts, the sacrifice of our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (Rom.5:15-16; 2Cor.9:15; Eph.4:7; cf. Rom.6:23; Eph.2:8-9). Moreover, He gives every believer at least one gift:

All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them **to each one**, just as he determines.  
1st Corinthians 12:11 NIV

And **to each of us** this grace has been given according to the measure of the gift of Christ.  
Ephesians 4:7

There are a variety of gifts given by the Spirit (1Cor.12:4; cf. 1Pet.4:10), a variety of specific ministries into which believers are severally placed by our Lord Jesus Christ (1Cor.12:5; 1Cor.12:14-27), and each of these will accomplish the effect that the Father has ordained in the Plan of God (1Cor.12:7; cf. 1Cor.3:7; Eph.2:10), with the ultimate purpose of "the good", that is, what is objectively best for each individual receiving ministry in order to grow up and be spiritually edified by the mutual and godly function of the Church (as it should be functioning). That is what lies behind the true concept of "dispensation" in the New Testament, namely, the means and manner in which God's truth is being dispensed in our Church Age, uniquely so because the Spirit has taken the lead in individual believers as never before, indwelling the entire Church and distributing spiritual gifts to us all.

So that you [all] (plural, i.e., "collectively") are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you await the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.  
1st Corinthians 4:7

(7b) . . . according to the riches of His grace (8) which He has caused to abound towards us in all wisdom and understanding, (9) [God] has made known to us the mystery He has willed, according to His own benevolent purpose which He determined in [Christ], (10) for administering (Gk. *oikonomia*, "**dispensation**") this [present] fulfillment of the epochs (i.e., the Church Age), so that all things may be incorporated into Christ, things in heaven, and things on earth.  
Ephesians 1:7b-10

This gracious favor has been given to me, the least of His holy ones: to give to the gentiles the good news of the indescribable wealth [that is in] Christ, and to enlighten everyone as to how [the truth] of this mystery (once hidden from the

ages in God who created everything) is now being **dispensed**, so that the enigmatically intricate wisdom of God might be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms through the agency of the Church.

Ephesians 3:8-10

It is of this [Church] that I, [Paul], have become a minister according to God's mandate given to me for **dispensing** [the truth] to you, in order to bring completeness to God's plan (lit., "word", Gk. *logos*), that is, [to make known] the mystery hidden from ages and from generations [past], but now revealed to His holy ones (i.e., believers). To all such God desired to make known what wealth there is in this glorious mystery regarding the gentiles, for it is that Christ – your hope of glory – is in you.

Colossians 1:25-27

And command them not to pursue myths and endless genealogies, things which provoke controversies rather than the **dispensing** [of] the [truth] of God by faith.

1st Timothy 1:4

According to its Greek etymology, a gift is a *charisma* (χαρισμα) or a "thing given by grace" (since "grace" in Greek is *charis*, χαρις: *charis-ma* = "a result of grace"). By their very name, therefore, spiritual gifts are not to be a matter of boasting but rather a matter humbly exploiting the grace we have been given in the service our dear Lord Jesus (Eph.1:7ff.).

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

1st Corinthians 15:10 NIV

Spiritual gifts are therefore not about us as individuals, but about the ministering of the truth of God's Word to our fellow believers and to the world. (Rom.12:3; 1Pet.4:10). For that reason neither pride (on the basis of having a particular gift) nor despondency (on the basis of not having a particular gift) is appropriate. All believers are gifted; all believers have equal opportunity to earn the top rewards and crowns our Lord promises to those who fulfill their missions in this life; and no believer will do either by acting out of improper motives, whether reveling in one gift and doing nothing out of arrogant complacency, or despairing with another gift and doing nothing out of misplaced depression.

For I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own gift **from God**, one in this manner and another in that.

1st Corinthians 7:7 NKJV

So on the one hand, God is the One who is making these determinations as to the distribution of gifts (the Spirit's domain: 1Cor.12:4), ministries (our Lord Jesus' domain: 1Cor.12:5), and their effectiveness (the Father's domain: 1Cor.12:6) – and who can doubt God's goodness, grace, fairness, or authority in this matter?

On the other hand, the entire principle of spiritual gifts within the Church is based not upon independence, but on the complete *interdependence* of all the members:

For in fact the body is not one member but many. (15) If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? (16) And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? (17) If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? (18) But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. (19) And if they were all one member, where would the body be? (20) But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. (21) And 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." (22) No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. (23) And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unrepresentable parts have greater modesty, ( 24) but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, (25) that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. (26) And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. (27) Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

1st Corinthians 12:14-27 NKJV

Not only is there therefore absolutely no basis for pride of one gift over another but there is also an absolute dependence of every believer in the Church here on earth upon every other believer – assuming no dysfunction. For any legitimate ministry to be effective, it has to be helped and empowered by all the others, and it has to offer legitimate help to all the others. We do not choose where we fit into the Body, but we do choose whether or not we are going to respond to the mission we have been given, grow up, advance, prepare, and serve in the way the Lord Jesus Christ intends. Being overly proud of our gifts, our ministry, or our effectiveness for the Lord is just as wrong-headed (and spiritually dangerous) as is any despondency on account of the fact that our gifts, ministries and their effectiveness are not what **we** would chose. God is the One who makes these determinations; our part is to accept what He has done with joy and obedience, and make the most of the opportunities He gives us. That is the only way the Church will thrive; that is the only way for us to live up to our personal potential and earn the eternal rewards that the Lord intends for us to win.

"So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.' "

Luke 17:10 NIV

(a) Communication Gifts

And as to those whom God has appointed [as officers] in the Church, [He appointed] apostles first [in rank], second prophets, third teachers . . .  
1st Corinthians 12:28a

But earnestly desire the greater gifts.  
1st Corinthians 12:31a NASB

Scripture calls the communication gifts "greater" and mentions them as "first" in rank because these gifts are the means of distributing God's truth directly to the Church. This should not be taken to mean that any *believer* is "better" or "greater" because of possessing such a gift, merely that the gift is "greater" and "of higher rank" because of its essential function in edifying the Church:

(22) On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, (23) and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, (24) while our presentable parts have no special need. But God has composed the human body in such a way as to give greater honor to the parts that are in short supply (analogous to teaching gifts).  
1st Corinthians 12:22-24

Thus, each part of the Body, each believer with his/her special gifts from the Spirit, performs an indispensable function just as no part of our physical bodies can be dispensed with; and just as we attribute the correct and proper level of concern to each part of our physical body, so we should think and act towards the Body of Christ. Communication gifts, being essential for the Body's edification and spiritual growth, are thus "greater" and "first in rank" in this respect: they are indispensable for the fulfillment of the Plan of God for each one of us. This means that the gifts themselves are to be respected and held in honor; it does **not** mean that a man who possesses such a gift is worthy of respect and honor just because of having been so gifted:

Let those elders who lead **well** be held worthy of double honor, especially those who **labor** in the Word and in teaching.  
1st Timothy 5:17

When it comes to individuals, effective service is worthy of honor, and, in terms of the communication gifts, effective teaching of the Word of God – which is based upon considerable labor (in initial preparation, in preparing for the teaching at hand, and in the actual teaching) – is what is to be honored (rather than the mere fact of possessing a gift; cf. 1Tim.4:13; 2Tim.2:15; 4:2). And while effective leadership and labor in the Word is worthy of "double honor" (1Tim.5:17), everyone who fights the fight for Jesus Christ here on earth in the proper employment of the gifts, ministries and effects they have been given is likewise worthy of honor now and reward in eternity (cf. 1Sam.30:24-25).

(11) Christ Himself appointed some of us apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers (12) in order to prepare all of His holy

people for their own ministry work, that the entire body of Christ might thus be built up.

Ephesians 4:11-12

We have already seen that the Spirit dispenses the gifts; here we see that an appointment from "Christ Himself" is required for any man possessing a communication gift to actually commence ministry (cf. 1Cor.12:5). Scripture no doubt makes this important point because of the special level of prior preparation necessary for any effective teaching ministry. Of the four communication gifts listed above, moreover, only two are still being given today: evangelist and pastor-teacher (for the cessation of certain gifts such as apostleship and prophecy, see section c below: "Temporary Gifts"). What is said to be common among all of the teaching/communications gifts is their purpose: "to prepare" the people of God for their own ministry work so that "the entire body of Christ might thus be built up" or edified: i.e., the task of these gifts is to contribute to the spiritual growth of all believers through teaching the Word of God and communicating its truths, with the ultimate end of all believers becoming effective in their own ministries which likewise contribute to the Body's edification – something only possible when a believer has grown up spiritually.

### **Evangelist:**

But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

2nd Timothy 4:5

Other than in the list provided in Ephesians 4:11, this passage and Acts 21:8 (where Philip "the evangelist" is mentioned) are the only other mentions of the gift itself in scripture. However, the verb "evangelize" is well represented in the New Testament (Greek: *euangelizo*; representing the Hebrew *biser*). It means "to give the good news", and is the verbal complement of the noun *euangelion* or "gospel". While the word "gospel" or "good news" does comprehend the entire realm of divine truth (cf. Rom.1:15), usage throughout the New Testament tends to focus on the fundamental truth of faith in the Person and work our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as the means of entrance into God's family providing eternal salvation. The giving of the gospel is most certainly something every pastor-teacher ought to make a regular and integral part of his ministry. For those with the gift of evangelism, however, that *is* the ministry.

Although we can certainly glean from its name and also from the way the gift is employed generally throughout the New Testament that proclaiming the gospel is the point of this gift (e.g., Lk.8:1; 9:6; 1Cor.1:17; 2Cor.10:16; Gal.1:8; Eph.3:8; Heb.4:2; 1Pet.1:12; 1:25; Rev.14:6), in keeping with the principle of flexibility scripture never gives any precise directions about its use. Any man who becomes aware of possessing a special talent for witnessing to others about the Person and work of Jesus Christ ought therefore to be wary about defining the parameters of any ministry undertaken to fulfill that gift purely in terms of what today in

contemporary culture we call "evangelists". Beyond all argument, there is much that is commonly undertaken nowadays ostensibly in the name of the gospel which has no basis in scripture – and which is most certainly not a necessary part of a ministry of evangelism. Altar calls, the apocryphal so-called "sinner's prayer", demands for emotional and public displays, and resorting to excessive theatrics (especially involving false demonstrations of miracles or gifts now ceased) are not only not necessary for the conversion of any heart which is truly seeking Jesus Christ but are also counterproductive and not conducive to the presentation of the simple truth of the gospel.

Secondly, evangelism is not meant for believers since believers have already accepted the gospel, but for unbelievers who need the presentation of the gospel in order to be saved. That would seem to be obvious. However, in the contemporary church-visible, much of what is called "evangelism" is conducted for the entertainment and (theoretical) "revival" of believers, and such events are often well-attended precisely because of the titillation provided by abuses such as those listed in point one.

Thirdly, evangelism is not enough. Becoming saved is a wonderful thing – obviously – but it is not the end of the Christian life. Rather, it is just the beginning. Undue emphasis upon evangelism to the exclusion of spiritual growth is at the heart of many of the problems in our lukewarm Church era of Laodicea. Any evangelist worth his salt, therefore, will be sure to direct any and all persons who come to Christ through his ministry to a good teaching ministry where the new convert can grow from infancy to spiritual maturity to the glory of Jesus Christ – and their own spiritual safety and eternal reward.

### **Pastor-Teacher:**

He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep".  
John 21:17 NKJV

While evangelism is to be directed towards unbelievers with the intention of leading them to Jesus Christ, teaching is meant for believers, since only believers, as we have seen, can receive truth beyond the simple principles of the gospel through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. In scripture, the gift of pastor-teacher is sometimes called "pastor", sometimes "teacher", and sometimes, as in Ephesians 4:11, "pastor-teacher". While "teaching" is straightforward enough, perhaps a word or two about "pastor" would not be out of place. The analogy of the under-shepherd tending that part of the flock with which he has been entrusted by the Great Shepherd of the Sheep, our Lord Jesus Christ, is a frequent one in scripture, and while it is true that just as a shepherd cares for his flock, so the pastor is directed to care for his parishioners, the main means of so doing is frequently misconstrued. As our Lord's words in the passage quoted directly

make so clear, **feeding** the sheep is the pastor's primary concern, and teaching the Word of God in a substantive and orthodox way is the means of doing so. That is how the pastor "pastures" or "pastors" his flock. Believers need the truth of the Word of God for encouragement, guidance and direction in their lives – and of course for their overall spiritual growth. No pastor can encourage anyone aright without the Word of God, and no pastor can lead or guide his flock forward spiritually apart from the teaching of the Word of God. All other duties, necessary or really superfluous, can hold a candle to this fundamental responsibility of the pastor-teacher:

And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you (i.e., in teaching the Word), and are over you in the Lord and admonish you (i.e., through the Word), and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake (i.e., in studying and teaching).

1st Thessalonians 5:12-13a NKJV

Until I (i.e., Paul) come, devote yourself to [public] reading [of the scriptures], to encouragement, to teaching [the Word].

1st Timothy 4:13

Let those elders who lead well be held worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the Word and in teaching.

1st Timothy 5:17

Be zealous to present yourself to God [as one] approved [in what you do], a workman who does not need to be ashamed, [like a skillful carpenter] "cutting straight" the Word of truth.

2nd Timothy 2:15

Proclaim the Word! Keep at it, whether circumstances are favorable or not! Reprove, rebuke, [and] encourage with all patience [in your] teaching!

2nd Timothy 4:2

(7) In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness (8) and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

Titus 2:7-8 NIV

Dedication to studying and teaching the Word of God as the primary, secondary and even tertiary responsibilities of the pastor-teacher (such as indicated above) is the only way for a man with this gift placed into service by the Lord to do his duty. Coupled with setting a good example, studying and teaching so as to feed the flock of Jesus Christ compromises the full and proper function of this important gift.

(1) So I urge the elders among you as a fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, even one who shares [with you] in the glory which is about to be



revealed, (2) **pastor** the flock of God under your charge (i.e., primarily through feeding them with the Word of God), overseeing them not out of compulsion but willingly in response to God, not eager for shameful material gain, but out of genuine enthusiasm, (3) not lording it over the charges [entrusted to you], but as genuine examples to your flock. (4) And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will carry off in victory the crown of glory which will never fade.

1st Peter 5:1-4 (cf. Heb.13:17)

Teaching gifts have been given "greater honor" by the Lord due to their relative rarity in the Body (1Cor.12:24; Greek: "giving greater honor to the member in short supply"; cf. 1Cor.14:12), but it is only those who carry out their duties well who are worthy of this "double honor" (1Tim.5:17). So while believers are to seek out those with such "greater" gifts for communicating the Word of God (1Cor.12:31), those who possess them labor under an even greater responsibility:

(10) As each one has received a [particular spiritual] gift, [so let us be] ministering it to each other as good stewards of the multi-faceted grace of God.

(11) If anyone communicates, let him do so **as if he were speaking words directly from God.**

1st Peter 4:10-11a

This is a high standard indeed, and helps to explain James' warning to the effect that "not many" should endeavor to be teachers – because of the stricter judgment teacher's receive (Jas.3:1). Any man who believes he has this gift, therefore, needs to realize 1) that the gift is all about the communication of God's truth to the glory of Jesus Christ (and not in any way about personal glorification, prestige or remuneration); 2) that while the gift gives insight into the truth and also facility with communicating, it is not "magic"; there is no "miraculous" inspiration of the individual concerned; rather, the Spirit uses the truth in the Bible and the truth believed and understood in the pastor-teacher's heart as His basis for empowering communication – in the same exact way in which He empowers all spiritual gifts; 3) that therefore hard work in digging out the truth of scripture and hard work in finding an appropriate way to communicate it are essential features of a teaching ministry well-performed; 4) and that for this reason a solid course of preparation before entering into actual teaching is much to be preferred. For it is not the response of the congregation or the numbers attracted or any other extraneous factor which validates the true success of any teaching ministry. Rather it is the Lord who will evaluate us all on that great day of days, according to how we have actually performed in His perfect judgment.

Each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work.

1st Corinthians 3:13 NASB

(b) Support Gifts

(10) As each one has received a [particular spiritual] **gift**, [so let us be] **ministering** it to each other as good stewards of **the multi-faceted grace of**

**God.** (11) **If anyone communicates**, let him do so as if he were speaking words directly from God. **If anyone serves**, let him do so from the strength which God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ, to whom is the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

1st Peter 4:10-11

As we have already observed, the number, type and combination of spiritual gifts are as numerous as the "multi-faceted grace of God" mentioned by Peter directly above. In terms of practical efficacy, therefore, gifts have, broadly speaking, two main areas of application: communicating God's truth and aiding in the process of its communication. This is because unbelievers need the truth to be saved, and believers need to the truth to grow and progress in the Christian life of following Jesus Christ. Today, the only communication gifts are that of pastor-teacher and evangelist (for previously given communication gifts, see section c below, "temporary gifts").

In terms of service for the support of communicating the Word of God, there are many more gifts, and, not surprisingly, even more areas of ministry. That is because service or support of hearing, learning and applying the Word of God encompasses every possible godly activity whereby one believer helps another to draw closer to Jesus Christ aside from formal teaching of the Word. If we give material items to others so that they may have the wherewithal to survive and so have the time and energy to learn and live the truth, that is support; if we encourage our fellow believers when they are down and under the gun to continue with their good Christian walk, that is support; if we pray for our pastor-teacher in the fight to study and teach, that is support. All of the three examples above are instances of activities that all believers should be involved in from time to time, but some are actually gifted for these activities and will be given particular ministries by the Lord to carry out in their prosecution when they have advanced to maturity.

When it comes to Christian service, therefore, we need to keep in mind three critical factors: 1) all such ministries are absolutely essential to the proper functioning of the Body of Christ; 2) there are a wide variety of such ministries based upon a seemingly infinite combination of gifts and circumstances so that thinking about these things only in terms of traditional gifts and ministries as defined by denominational Christianity would be a grave error; and 3) the purpose of all gifts and ministries, whether of communication or service, is the building up of Christ's Church through the salvation of who have been called to be saved and the spiritual growth and progress of all who have put their faith in Jesus Christ our dear Lord and Savior (cf. Matt.7:24; Acts 20:32; Rom.14:19; 15:12; 1Cor.8:1; 10:23; 14:3-5; 14:17; 14:26; 2Cor.10:8; 12:19; 13:10; Eph.4:12; 4:16; 4:29; 1Pet.2:5):

In the same way you also, since you are [so] desirous of spiritual gifts, seek that you may abound [in them] for the purpose of the **edification** of the Church.

1st Corinthians 14:12

Let all these things (i.e., the functioning of the various spiritual gifts) be done for the purpose of **edification**.

1st Corinthians 14:26b

Therefore encourage one another, and **edify** one another (i.e., contribute to the spiritual growth of each other), just as you are doing.

1st Thessalonians 5:11

All who are "of the faith", all who have been allotted a measure of saving faith (Rom.12:3; 2Pet.1:1), and have been saved by putting that faith in the One who died for us, Jesus Christ the Lord, have a role to play in this process of the edification of the Body – through the proper functioning of the gifts we have all been severally given. As we saw in the case of Peter (1Pet.4:10-11 considered above), so in the case of Paul, service and communication are described as the two main categories; however, in the passage below Paul mentions other gifts of communication and service by name:

(3) Through the grace which has been given to me I tell everyone among you not to over-think [his role] beyond what he ought to think, but to direct his thinking towards sober thoughts [in this regard], inasmuch as God has allotted each [and every] one of us a measure of [our common] faith [in Jesus Christ] (cf. 2Pet.1:1).

(4) For just as there are many members in the one body [we possess], but all those members do not have the same function, (5) so also we [the Church] are one Body in Christ, though we are many, each one of us being individual members therein. (6) Since then we have gifts which **differ** according to the grace given to us, [let each of us minister to the Body appropriately]: if [one has the gift of] prophecy, [let him exercise it] commensurate with his faith; (7) if [a gift of] service, then in carrying out that service; if one is teaching [by gift], then [let him do so] in his teaching; (8) if one is encouraging others [by gift], then [let him do so] in his encouragement; he who gives, [let him do so] with generosity; he who superintends, [let him do so] with diligence; he who does acts of charity, [let him do so] with cheerfulness.

Romans 12:3-8

**Service:** We have already covered the gift of pastor-teacher and will be covering prophecy below under the category of temporary gifts. Service, while no doubt constituting an umbrella of various other gifts, is nevertheless worthy of individual treatment – inasmuch as Paul deems it worthy of separate mention above in spite of listing other service-related gifts immediately thereafter.

Despite the fact that much of the disagreement which has taken place between various Christian sects and denominations over the course of the history of the Church has had to do with polity, the fact is that the apostles, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, left most questions of local church governance deliberately vague. The reason, of course, was to allow an appropriate level of flexibility as to how churches choose to organize themselves – because in biblical terms churches are all about the teaching of the Word of God, not superficial

issues of governance. What the New Testament does describe, however, are the necessary qualifications of the men chosen to lead the local church as elders and to serve in its official administrative duties as "deacons" (1Tim.3:8-13).

The word "deacon" means "servant", and the word is from the same Greek root as the word for "service" in Romans 12:7 above. What we may take from this is that there is an office of "servant/deacon", namely, individuals who are responsible for the money a local church may collect for supporting its pastor-teacher (for example), and that there is also a gift of service. The latter (deacon) may have an official position in a local church as its fulfillment in the will of God, but in doubtless many more cases the gift of service will be applied in ministries of an unofficial capacity, often not even directly connected to a local church. Service, biblically speaking, is service to Christ's Church, and can entail any activity which promotes its growth, both absolutely (as in assisting any evangelical ministry that seeks to bring the gospel to the unsaved) and relatively (as in assisting any teaching ministry that seeks to edify those who are already believers through the truth of the Word of God). Any ministry, moreover, which helps other believers in ways which empower or accelerate their spiritual growth (as in fulfilling necessary material need or lending encouragement in difficult situations), also qualify as *diakonia* (i.e., "service"). Therefore flexibility in interpreting both the parameters of the gift itself and the mission field of its potential application is certainly appropriate.

I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant (*diakonos*) of the church in Cenchrea.

Romans 16:1 NKJV

Phoebe was entrusted with the mission of taking the epistle to the Romans from Corinth where Paul probably penned it, all the way to Rome – a not inconsiderable task involving both hardships and dangers, and one which speaks volumes about the faithfulness and fortitude the apostle Paul found in her. This was a "service" to the entire Church which still speaks to us today – nor was it her only one:

For indeed she has been a helper (*diakonos*) of many and of myself also.

Romans 16:2b

The gift of "helps" in 1st Corinthians 12:28 describes this gift of service exercised apart from a formalized office in the local church.

**Encouragement:** Mutual encouragement in the Lord through the Word of God is one of the main reasons for the local church and for believers assembling themselves together:

(24) And let us give careful attention to one another[']s ministries] as motivation for [our own] love and good works, (25) not abandoning your mutual assembling as some have made it their practice to do [and which makes this impossible], but rather encouraging each other [to persevere in this work of the Lord], and doing

so to an ever greater degree to the extent that you see the day [of the Lord] drawing [ever] closer.

Hebrews 10:24-25

This encouragement comes through the Word of God, as the truth, empowered by the Holy Spirit, is really the only thing capable of encouraging us when we are under pressure from the world, the flesh and the devil. And while therefore encouragement is something inherent in teaching the Word of God and is a factor in every ministry of every gift, it is certainly true that some believers are specially gifted in this respect.

(17) I rejoice over the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have supplied what was lacking on your part. (18) For they have refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such men.

1st Corinthians 16:17-18 NASB

### **Giving:**

So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

2nd Corinthians 9:7 NKJV

Giving is a Christian application in which all believers will doubtless participate at some point in their walk with Jesus Christ. While most Christian giving today takes place in support of local churches and denominations, it is significant that there are no instances of this in the New Testament.<sup>49</sup> We are told that supporting pastor-teachers who are actually laboring in the Word of God is appropriate (Gal.6:6; 1Tim.5:17-18; cf. 1Cor.9:11), but this can certainly be accomplished without the massive infrastructure some churches and denominations deploy. Most of the apostle Paul's concern with giving is directed not to such matters but with the support of other believers hard-pressed and in need on account of famine and persecution (e.g., Rom.15:16; 2Cor.8:1 - 9:15).

(17) Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. (18) Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, (19) storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

1st Timothy 6:17-19 NKJV

As the above verses and also the presence of giving on the list of spiritual gifts in our passage at Romans 12:8 indicates, giving is also the special province of individual Christians. The bestowal by the Lord of abundant resources on some in order that they may share with those in need is certainly part of God's plan (2Cor.8:13-15), but it also should be remembered that it is not the size of the gift that counts:

(3) So He said, "Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; (4) for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had."

Luke 21:23-24 NKJV

**Superintendence:** Within the local church, leadership or superintendence is the province of the elders (also called "overseers", and also "bishops" in older translations), and scripture provides specific ground rules for the qualifications and service for this office (e.g., 1Tim.3:1-7; 5:20; Tit.1:5-9). However, the *gift* of superintendence will be of use for taking the administrative lead in any ministry which grows to encompass multiple believers, and, again, some believers are obviously more gifted to assume positions of administrative leadership than others. In 1st Corinthians 12:28, the gift of "governments" (KJV: translating the Greek work *kybernesis*, literally, "captaincy") refers specifically to this same gift as distinguished from the office of elder in the local church.

**Charity:** This gift is sometimes translated "mercy", an act often synonymous with the giving of alms in biblical times. It differs from giving money in two respects. First, the recipient of the blessing is an individual in personal need of help rather than a ministry requiring support. Secondly, the means of providing this mercy is not restricted to the giving of money, encompassing all manner of acts of goodness, often those which money cannot buy, such as visiting and caring for the sick, visiting believers wrongly imprisoned, giving all manner of charitable help to those believers who need it – and also benefitting unbelievers as an opportunity for evangelism. As with giving and other spiritual gifts, all believers ought to do some of these things in their daily Christian application from time to time, but some believers are specially gifted in this area. If so, then it is to this area that they ought to be looking for the particular ministry Christ has for them.

### **Conclusion:**

(24) And let us give careful attention to one another[*'s ministries*] as motivation for [our own] love and good works, (25) not abandoning your mutual assembling as some have made it their practice to do [and which makes this impossible], but rather encouraging each other [to persevere in this work of the Lord], and doing so to an ever greater degree to the extent that you see the day [of the Lord] drawing [ever] closer.

Hebrews 10:24-25

As Paul assures us here, mutual edification is the goal of the Body of Christ, and encouragement, through providing material, moral, and prayer support, is the essential means by which this encouragement is provided – with the truth of the Word of God being the essence of all such encouragement and support, as well as the basis of all edification. This is the purpose of all spiritual gifts: the edification of the Body of Jesus Christ and her mutual encouragement and support in that task through the service of one part to the other "until we all reach that unifying [goal] of belief in and full-knowledge of the Son of God, that each of us might be a

perfect person, that is, that we might attain to that standard of maturity whose attainment is defined by Christ" (Eph.4:13).

For I wish that all men were even as I myself (i.e., unmarried). But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that.

1st Corinthians 7:7 NKJV

But for Paul's mention here of celibacy for intensive service to Christ being a "gift", we would no doubt be reluctant to include it in any list of spiritual gifts. This shows us plainly that, although there are a number of treatments of spiritual gifts in the New Testament (notably 1Cor.12; Rom.12; Eph.4), none are meant to be comprehensive so that we cannot rule out other gifts which may not be specifically mentioned. These facts also suggest that there may be many variations of the gifts which are described (along with combinations of gifts). The result is that each believer is a unique part of the Body of Christ, and essential to its proper functioning, each member being specially gifted to the end that all gifts may be properly used (1Cor.12:7) and produce their intended effects (Eph.2:10).

I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong – that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith.  
Romans 1:11-12 NIV

All of the dysfunction currently apparent in the church-visible is a result of the deficiency of individual believers in responding to the Spirit so as to grow up spiritually, attain a battle-tested hardness of character (as opposed to hardness of heart) through enduring heaven-sent trials and tests, and then offer him/herself up for the particular ministry the Lord has in mind. Pastor/teachers no doubt are more to blame than most (e.g., Jas.3:1), but there is plenty of blame to go around in our lukewarm era of Laodicea. The standard of growth and service to Christ's Church to which we are called in the exercise of our God-given gifts is clear:

Of which [gospel] I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power.  
Ephesians 3:7 NASB

Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.  
1st Timothy 4:14 NKJV

Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.  
2nd Timothy 1:6 NKJV

### (c) Temporary Gifts

During the early days of the apostolic era of the Church, the book of Acts records many miracles and instances of dramatic "sign-gifts", as they are often called. It is, however, important to realize that all such activity predated the completing of

the Bible and its distribution to the Church. In God's eyes, the availability of His completed written Word, the very thinking of Him who is the Living Word of God, Jesus Christ our Lord (1Cor.2:16; cf. Rev.19:13), is a far more important development and far more useful to the edification and advance of the Church than the miracles and miraculous gifts designed to supplement spiritual growth before the New Testament came on the scene.

"Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed!"

John 20:29 NKJV

Our Lord's words directly above place beyond doubt the proposition that truth believed through faith alone is of more value than when supported by the crutch of evident miracles. The former is the stuff of spiritual maturity, the latter of spiritual infancy.

When I was a child, I spoke like a child; thought like a child; reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I did away with childish things.

1st Corinthians 13:11

When the Church had grown up, found itself well-provided with prepared teachers and a Bible fully complete and widely distributed, the time of childhood was over, so that the special provisions of childhood likewise came to an end (the dramatic manifestations of the mass pouring out of the Spirit such as in Acts chapter ten, for example, are demonstrably no longer taking place). The Church was now free to do the "greater things" our Lord promised (Jn.14:12) – not more impressive miracles than those of our Lord (which of the apostles, for example, ever restored sight to the blind?), but the commencement of the process of expansion and edification through faith in the truth.

(18) And these words I myself heard as they were delivered from heaven, for I was with Him on the holy mountain (i.e., the Transfiguration; cf. Matt.17:1-8).

(19) Yet I consider ***the prophetically inspired Word*** (i.e. the Bible) ***even more reliable*** (i.e., than what I saw with my own eyes). You too would do well to pay the closest attention to this [prophetically inspired Word], just as to a lamp shining in a dark place (cf. Ps.119:105), until the day dawns, and the Morning Star rises (i.e. the Living Word, Jesus Christ, returns).

2nd Peter 1:18-19

Just as Peter tells us that the "prophetic Word" is "more sure" even than the vision of the second advent he was given to experience so vividly, so we may be sure that the ministering of the truth of the entire Word of God and the participation in its expansion to a greater number of people willing to receive it is "greater works" – in respect to the truth and its acceptance – greater even than the miracles and sign-gifts of times past which had this very reception as their purpose (Jn.14:11; cf. Jn.14:26). Nothing is impossible for God. The fact that we even exist and have free will is a mind-boggling miracle. There is nothing in the natural realm that He could not alter or change at will for any reason. And we are



the beneficiaries of all manner of miracles every day and in every way. And we are right and justified to pray for His miraculous deliverance whenever we are in need. But when it comes to "sign gifts" or the demonstrable **performance** of miracles through obvious human agency, there is a good reason why these are not in truth being given or being divinely empowered in our day (indeed, not even since before the end of the apostolic era): that is, so that our faith might be in God and in His Word, so that we might trust in what He has told us – not in what our eyes see or what our ears hear. The truth is for the strong and the mature of faith; miracles are necessary only for those who are weak and childish in faith.

(8) Love never falls [into inactivity]. But whether [we are talking about gifts of] prophecy, **they will cease**, or about [gifts of] tongues, **they will come to a stop**, or [about the gift of] knowledge, **it will be done away with**. (9) For when we exercise the gift of knowledge, its results are only partial. And when we exercise the gift of prophecy, its results are only partial. (10) But when **what is complete** shall have come on the scene (i.e., the completed Bible available to a mature Church), all partial measures shall be done away with.

1st Corinthians 13:8-10

This passage, coming directly before verse eleven where Paul distinguishes between the childish and the mature, emphatically states that the sign-gifts (exemplified here by prophecy, tongues and knowledge) will, in fact, cease (just as the things of childhood eventually cease). Since these are said to be replaced by "the perfect" (KJV), namely, "that which is complete", and since the context is one of communicating the truth (that is what all three of these gifts are meant to do), the burden of proof falls upon those who want to claim that the "complete" or "perfect" is not the Bible. Jesus Christ is the "perfect One" who completed the perfect mission at the cross (Jn.19:30; Heb.12:2; cf. Matt.5:48); what else then might "the perfect thing" (literally from the Greek) be – apart from the completed Word of God, the written complement of the Living Word, Jesus Christ our Lord?

1st Corinthians chapter thirteen comes directly after Paul's extensive discussion of spiritual gifts in chapter twelve, and it is not for no reason, therefore, that he enumerates a number of the gifts he has just discussed in that prior chapter as "ceasing" or "being done away with" at the time when "the perfect comes". Children need certain special "help" until they become mature (diapers, cribs, baby-food, etc.). But when we have grown up, we are able to "put away childish things" (v.11). Once the Church had grown up enough, being sufficiently established in terms of numbers, organized congregations, established elders able to teach, and, most importantly, finding itself in possession of the completed canon of the Word of God, with the "imperfect" and "childish" status now become a "perfect" and "mature" one, the cribs and bottles and training wheels could be taken away. Paul's prophecy here about these gifts, given in the context of their present employment, did come true, and not all that long after he gave it (cf. 2Tim.4:20). Just as he personally "put away childish things" when he became a "mature/perfect" adult, so also it happened with the Church.

I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready  
1st Corinthians 3:2 NIV

The fact that, despite many easily refutable claims to the contrary, sign gifts are in fact **not** being given by the Spirit in our day – and have not been since the days of the apostles – is further proof of these conclusion (for example, beyond all argument there are only twelve apostles so that this gift is most certainly in cessation). Lack of sign gifts is **not** a result of any failure in the Church and does **not** result from failing to ask for them; rather, the trend in our day to seek a return to the days of infancy is the failure – and cannot for all its emotional excess force the Spirit to do what He has not in fact done. For the question of the existence of sign-gifts in the Church today is, ultimately, one not of faith but of fact, and claiming to have a gift one does not have is at the very least an affront to the Holy Spirit (Matt.10:1).

(8) For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, (9) to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, (10) to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.  
1st Corinthians 12:8-10 NKJV

This list, given to us by Paul in the context of explaining the importance of communication gifts versus the dramatic "sign gifts" upon which the Corinthians were fixated to the point of distraction, consists entirely of temporary gifts which have now ceased to be given by the Holy Spirit (prophecy, knowledge and tongues being specifically mentioned in the next chapter as being on the point of cessation). The completed canon of scripture ("the perfect" of 1Cor.13:10) available to the now mature Church has obviated the need for special communication of divine revelation as well as dramatic sign-gifts which would, if left in place, distract the Church from its objective of spiritual growth, progress and production based upon careful attention to the Word of God itself.

**Wisdom, Knowledge and Faith:** All three of these temporary spiritual gifts were concerned with the dissemination of God's truth before the coming of the New Testament. Moreover, the "gift" of wisdom, the "gift" of knowledge, and the "gift" of faith are all to be carefully distinguished from the wisdom and knowledge to which every believer should aspire through spiritual growth, and from the faith in Christ which all believers share (e.g., 2Pet.1:1), which grows ever stronger as we progress in the Christian life in the proper way "from faith to faith" (Rom.1:17).

As to the gift of faith (specifically, "faith in/by the Spirit"), the phrase "in/by the Spirit" is added to distinguish this as a spiritual gift concerned with the Spirit's communication of the truth as opposed to the heart-aspect of the faith we believers all have in common. The first two gifts mentioned, "word of wisdom

through the Spirit" and "word of knowledge according to the same Spirit", are clearly both communication gifts, as the Greek word *logos*, "word", indicates. This collocation makes it clear that the third gift mentioned, the "gift of faith", had a similar function to the other two gifts listed here. Just as the "word of wisdom" was given to believers to impart spiritual wisdom to other believers (not necessarily as a pastor but in believer to believer fellowship, formal and informal), and just as the "word of knowledge" was given to believers to impart spiritual knowledge (wisdom being application of truth to a particular circumstance; knowledge consisting of raw truth, learned today from scripture and Bible teaching alone, but during this brief period being communicated directly by the Spirit and meant to be repeated to other believers), so the gift of faith seems to have been given with the purpose of imparting encouragement to other believers to help them strengthen and rally their own faith.

Since Paul mentions the "visible demonstration of the Spirit" in verse seven of this chapter, we conclude that these three are temporary sign-gifts which have now ceased (1Cor.13:8-12) – as the next six certainly are: healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues, and the interpretation of tongues. That is not to say that the functions of "knowledge, wisdom, faith, and (further down) discernment" have ceased; what it does mean is that however a believer may be specially gifted in these respects today, the truth that empowers those gifts will come in each case from the Bible through the same process of spiritual growth in the power of the Spirit that all believers experience (or should). That is to say, while during the early days of the apostles and before the completion and distribution of the Bible the **content** of the "word of wisdom" or "word of knowledge" or "[word of] faith" seems to have been supplied directly by the Spirit apart from scripture (which was not complete or completely available), today, however, whatever content the Spirit uses in any such empowerment of our spiritual gifts has to come into our hearts through hearing, learning and believing the truth of scripture in the same way all our brothers and sisters in Christ receive it. There is no special source of truth today – other than the most special source of all, namely, the Bible. This is also not to say that all believers are not capable of (and in many cases responsible to) act in and speak words of encouragement in accordance with "knowledge, wisdom and faith". Indeed we are, and, clearly, some of our brothers and sisters are much better at doing this than others are – and no doubt that is a reflection of the gift(s) they have been given. What it does mean is that the Spirit is not putting wisdom, knowledge and the content of what is believed in faith directly into our hearts in a miraculous way absent our hearing and believing the truth of scripture now that the entire Bible is blessedly available.

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.  
1st Corinthians 13:2 NKJV

Paul's reiteration here of the first three gifts on the list in 1st Corinthians 12:8-10 in conjunction with the gift of prophecy reinforces the point that all three are communication gifts.<sup>50</sup> In the context of gifts ceasing, moreover, it reinforces the point that they, along with all of the other nine gifts on that list, were temporary (cf. 1Cor.13:8-9: "Though there be knowledge, it also will be done away with"; i.e., not knowledge per se but the gift of knowledge).

But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you **unless I speak to you** either by revelation, **by knowledge**, by prophesying, or by teaching?  
1st Corinthians 14:6 NKJV

### **Healing:**

And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power (lit., "authority") over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease.  
Matthew 10:1 NKJV

Apart from those of our Lord, all of the examples of miraculous and instantaneous healing by word or by touch were accomplished by the apostles. That does not mean that others did not receive this miraculous gift of healing, but it does demonstrate that without God-given authority, no one has the power to do this. That would seem to be obvious inasmuch as we are speaking here of spiritual gifts, abilities given by the Spirit of God to some but not to others. Given the widespread abuse in our day, however, it is apparently necessary to drive home the point that, along with the other gifts on the list in 1st Corinthians 12:8-10, healing was a *temporary* gift, given during the early days of the apostles for the purpose of empowering the incipient Church to spread the gospel to an otherwise dark world before the Bible was available and in the absence of an infrastructure of churches and believers to aid that effort. When our Lord healed, "power" went out from Him (Mk.5:30; Lk.6:19), and the healing miracles of the apostles were often dramatic and not necessarily repeated or repeatable to the end of their days (2Tim.4:20). These facts alone ought to be sufficient to restrain anyone today from falsely claiming such power, or at least to restrain anyone today from believing that others possess this temporary gift. God does heal (e.g., Ex.15:26; Ps.103:3). God does answer prayers for healing (e.g., Jas.5:13-16). The gift of being able to miraculously heal another person at will by word or touch, however, has ceased to be given.

And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them.  
Mark 6:13 NKJV

### **Miracles:**

God also testified to it (i.e., the word of salvation) by signs, wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.  
Hebrews 2:4 NIV

As with the other temporary gifts, the purpose of "signs, wonders and miracles" ("powers" in the Greek) was to testify to and gain a hearing for the gospel during the incipient days of the Church. As with the case in the passage above, often in scripture the precise nature of the miracles, signs and wonders performed is not specified (cf. Acts 2:22; 2:43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 8:13; 14:3; 19:11; Rom.15:19; Gal.3:5). The gift of "miracles" thus covers all manner of truly supernatural demonstrations of the power of God accomplished through the agency of gifted members of the Church, most prominently His apostles and their associates.

Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles.  
Acts 15:12 NKJV

Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.  
2nd Corinthians 12:12 NKJV

Nothing is impossible for God; there is nothing He cannot do. We believers experience His miracles and miraculous love and care every day. The gift of miracles, on the other hand, was an empowerment that allowed individual believers to perform wonders through the Spirit yet clearly by their own hand. In this way, God's authority given to them was made manifest, and this in turn gave authority to the message of truth they then proclaimed as light in a dark world – an especially important help for the apostles through whose ministries the gospel first spread widely abroad (cf. Acts 12:7-17; 16:25-26):

(15) So that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them.  
(16) Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.  
Act 5:15-16 NKJV

(11) Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, (12) so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them.  
Act 19:11-12 NKJV

And not only did the Lord work miracles through the hands of the apostles as in the examples above, but He also gave them the power through this gift to perform wonders directly by their own hand. Liars were struck dead at their word (Acts 5:1-10), the dead were raised (Acts 9:36-41; 20:9-12), opponents of the truth were stricken with blindness (Acts 13:6-11), demons were cast out (Acts 16:16-18; cf.

Mk.6:13; Lk.10:17; Acts 5:16; 8:7; 19:12), impending events were revealed beforehand (Acts 11:28; cf. 2Ki.4:27; Amos 3:7; 1Cor.14:6), wondrous visions were given (2Cor.12:1-5). Judging from the way these incidents are described as being special occurrences in the book of Acts, coupled with their relatively infrequent mention in the epistles, it is fair to conclude that as the gospel spread and the New Testament began to be written and distributed, this gift began to fade away. It is certainly also fair to point out that there have been few individuals in history with the requisite humility and closeness to the Lord to be able to handle a gift such as this, so that its temporary nature is all the more understandable.

### **Prophecy:**

Since then we have gifts which *differ* according to the grace given to us, [let each of us minister to the Body appropriately]: if [one has the gift of] prophecy, [let him exercise it] commensurate with his faith.

Romans 12:6

Prophecy is a gift whereby the Lord gives the prophet a specific message to proclaim for the edification of the Church. This may come by way of foretelling (e.g., Acts 11:27-28), directing (e.g., Acts 13:1-2; cf. 1Sam.9:15-17), or encouraging through a word from the Lord (e.g., Acts 15:32). This gift (in combination with the office of prophet, a specific empowerment from the Lord) was also instrumental in the writing of scripture (e.g., Hos.1:1-2; 2Pet.1:19-21); that particular aspect of prophecy came to an end with the completion of the book of Revelation by the apostle John (cf. Rev.22:18-19). The giving by the Lord of specific messages not meant to be written down in the Bible to individuals with the gift of prophecy came to an end at least by the time of the completion of the canon (cf. Num.11:25). Verbal Prophecy, a communication gift, was beneficial in filling in the gaps in the message of the truth before the New Testament had been completed, and for that reason was to be desired (just as the communication gifts active today are to be considered "greater": 1Cor.12:31; cf. 1Cor.12:28):

(1) Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy. (2) For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people but to God. Indeed, no one understands them; they utter mysteries by the Spirit. (3) But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort. (4) Anyone who speaks in a tongue edifies themselves, but the one who prophesies edifies the church.

1st Corinthians 14:1-4 NIV

And while the gift was certainly miraculous in nature, it was never an ecstatic one in the sense of the person prophesying being out of control (as the word ecstatic implies):

(29) Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. (30) But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. (31) For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. (32)

***And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.*** (33) For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

1st Corinthians 14:29-33 NKJV

### **Discerning of Spirits:**

The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.

1st Corinthians 2:14 NIV

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

1st John 4:1 NKJV

As these verses indicate, spiritual discernment or "spiritual common sense" is (or should be) a facet of every believer's walk in the world, becoming more refined with every passing day as we grow in the Lord (cf. Phil.1:9-11; Heb.5:14; cf. Rom.12:1-2; Eph.6:5-8). The gift of discernment of spirits (i.e., the intents of the heart of human beings) was no doubt especially necessary during the early days of the Church when so many false teachers preyed upon the widely dispersed congregations who did not as yet have a completed Bible so as to refute false claims and errant teachings.

We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

1st John 4:6 NASB (cf. 2Thes.2:1-2)

### **Tongues and Interpretation:**

(10) Undoubtedly there are all sorts of languages in the world, yet ***none of them is without meaning.*** (11) If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and the speaker is a foreigner to me.

(12) So it is with you. Since you are eager for gifts of the Spirit, try to excel in those that build up the church. (13) For this reason the one who speaks in a tongue should pray that they may interpret what they say.

1st Corinthians 14:10-13 NIV

The entire context of this chapter (and indeed of chapters 12-14 of 1st Corinthians) makes it perspicuously clear that the gift of tongues was a communication gift meant for the evangelization of individuals whose native language was different from those being evangelized.

(6) And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak ***in his own language.*** (7) Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? (8) And how is it that we hear, each in our own

language in which we were born?"

Acts 2:6-8 NKJV

Indeed, the word "tongue" throughout 1st Corinthians is the Greek word *glossa* – which means, in such contexts, **language**. At the very least, no one can read these three chapters and come away with the idea that anyone should speak in tongues without at the same time someone being present with the gift of interpreting tongues, the companion gift which allowed the evangelist to understand what those being evangelized were saying in return. For this Paul states in no uncertain terms:

(28) If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. (29) But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God.

1st Corinthians 14:28-29 NKJV

The question of present day tongues is not a question of faith but of fact. All believers understand that God can do whatever He pleases and that the Holy Spirit could definitely give this temporary gift if it were His will to do so. The question is whether or not He has actually done so. Proclaiming that He has done something He has not in fact done is spiritually dangerous and far worse than any supposed deficiency of faith for failing to believe people who claim to have this gift. Since tongues were actual, human languages, anyone claiming to speak in a tongue should easily be able to verify this gift. The production of sounds without meaning is not the gift of tongues:

(7) Even in the case of lifeless things that make sounds, such as the pipe or harp, how will anyone know what tune is being played unless there is a distinction in the notes? (8) Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle? (9) So it is with you. Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying? You will just be speaking into the air. (10) Undoubtedly there are all sorts of languages in the world, yet **none of them is without meaning**. (11) If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and the speaker is a foreigner to me.

1st Corinthians 14:7-11 NIV

The abuse of this gift, even under the supervision of the apostles when it was actually being given, is obvious enough from the fact that Paul had to devote so much time to regulating it. What passes for the gift of tongues today is in every case where the claim is false a dangerous imposition on the Church, as is the case with all who falsely claim the possession of gifts the Spirit has not in fact given.

(18) Let no one gain control over your life, desiring to [enslave you to himself] through a show of false humility and the adoration of angels, basing his approach on what he has [allegedly] seen while puffed up by his own fleshly thoughts, (19) yet not embracing the Head [Christ]. For it is from this Source that the entire body [the Church] is [truly] supplied and instructed through [all] its joints and



sinews, and [thus] produces the growth that God has given.  
Colossians 2:18-19

(1) And there arose among the people false prophets, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who shall introduce destructive false doctrines – even denying the Master who bought them – and bringing swift destruction upon themselves. (2) And many will follow their lascivious ways so that the way of truth will be subject to blasphemy on their account. (3) And in their greed they will exploit you for profit by means of their fraudulent teachings. [God's] condemnation upon them long since has not been lying dormant, and [His impending] destruction of them has not been slumbering.  
2nd Peter 2:1-3

In the same way these [false teachers] deluding themselves with false visions defile their flesh, reject [God's] sovereign authority, and bring slander against angels (i.e., Gnostic "combat" with *aeons*).  
Jude 1:8

(2) Empowerment of Ministry: In addition to providing the power and support for the believer's personal walk and the spiritual gifts covered above, we would be remiss not to point out that it is the Holy Spirit who, in addition to assigning us our gifts, empowers all of our individual ministries.

For it is we [believers] who are the [true] circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh.  
Philippians 3:3 NIV

The fact that the Spirit's support provided to those who are truly serving the Body of Christ has often been accomplished in a miraculous way should be of particular encouragement to us all as we prepare to do our part to aid in the edification of the Church just as our dear Lord Jesus would have us to do (e.g., Acts 8:39; 10:19-20; 16:25-26; cf. Ex.35:31; Ezek.2:2; 3:12; 3:24; 8:3).

(18) I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done – (19) by the power of signs and wonders, through the power of the Spirit of God. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ.  
Romans 15:18-19 NIV

(7) For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. (8) So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God.  
2nd Timothy 2:7-8 NIV

(3) The Example of Jesus Christ:

(19) And this hope [truly] is what "anchors" our lives, a secure and solid [anchor of hope] which penetrates [behind] the veil (i.e., the heavens) into the inner place (i.e., the heavenly holy of holies) (20) where **our vanguard**, Jesus, has entered on our behalf, having become a High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 6:19-20

The word "vanguard" (Greek *prodromos*: literally, "forerunner") expresses very graphically the fact that Christ was the first to "run the race", the first to tread the path of spiritual growth, progress and production – the essentials of the Christian life. In all things relating to our lives in this world, He is our example. His utilization of the resources of the Holy Spirit, therefore, and the specifics of the ministry of the Spirit to Him, while necessarily of a different order of magnitude, are nonetheless meant to be taken as a direct parallel from which we are to learn how to walk as Jesus walked.

"I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."

John 13:15 NIV

Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

1st Corinthians 11:1 NIV

It is to this [sharing in the sufferings of Christ] that you have been called, for Christ also died on your behalf, leaving you an example so that you might follow in His footsteps.

1st Peter 2:21

The ministry of the Spirit to our Lord Jesus Christ is not only obviously and exceptionally important in its own right; it is also illustrative in many important ways of the Holy Spirit's ministry to believers, especially for we who have been blessed with the pouring out of the Spirit after Pentecost. While other believers of the past are said to have had a special connection with the Spirit (Moses, Elijah, Elisha and John, notably), Jesus was the first to be **both** indwelt and filled by the Spirit from birth – the same indwelling that we who belong to Him today have now been given at the new birth, and the same filling that can be ours as we "grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2Pet.3:18). So while much about our Lord, His life and His ministry is unquestionably unique, we can, nevertheless, also learn much about the Spirit's ministry to us – and its limitless potential – through a consideration of His ministry to our dear Lord Jesus.

1. The Incarnation: Unlike any other human being before or since, the engendering of our Lord's human body came about not through the agency of any created thing, not through any man or any angel, but through the Holy Spirit.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ happened in this way. While His mother, Mary, was engaged to Joseph, [and] before the two of them had come together [as man and

wife], she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit.  
Matthew 1:18

"Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For that which has been conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit".  
Matthew 1:20b

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. For this very reason that which is going to be born [of you] will be called holy, [the] Son of God".  
Luke 1:35

Analogously, believers are born again supernaturally through the power of the same Holy Spirit:

(12) But as many as accepted Him, to them He gave the power to become children of God, [that is,] to those who put their faith in His Person, (13) [even those] who were not [born] of blood, or fleshly desire, or human will, but [who] were born of God (i.e., "born again").  
John 1:12-13

## 2. Indwelling and Filling:

And the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon Him (i.e., the Messiah), the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.  
Isaiah 11:2

Behold my Servant – I will support Him. My chosen One – my soul (i.e., heart) takes pleasure in Him. I have placed my Spirit upon Him. He will bring forth justice for the nations.  
Isaiah 42:1

"And now my Lord [who is] LORD has sent Me (i.e., the Messiah), and His Spirit."  
Isaiah 48:16b

(34) For the One God sent speaks the words of God. For the Father does not give [Him] the Spirit in a sparing way. (35) He loves the Son and has given everything into His hand.  
John 3:34-35 (cf. Jn.6:63)

As a result of His victory at the cross, our Lord has bequeathed us, His Church, this same gift of the Holy Spirit as He enjoyed it during His earthly life. All believers are indwelt, and the potential for influence and direction coming from the Spirit through His filling of us is unlimited – except as we limit it through our imperfect walk. The potential, however, is tremendous, to the degree that we show ourselves willing to follow in our Lord Jesus Christ's footsteps.

### 3. The Baptism of Christ:

"The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit."

John 1:33b NIV

The visible anointing of the Spirit given to Christ at the commencement of His public ministry is analogous to the empowerment coming from the Spirit in an indisputable way to all who are walking with Jesus Christ and serving Him as He would have us to do.

As many as are being led [forward] by the Spirit, these are the ones who are [truly] the sons of God.

Romans 8:14

### 4. The Temptation of Christ:

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted (i.e., "tested") by the devil.

Matthew 4:1 NIV

Just as our Lord was prepared through the Spirit's direction for all of the difficult things He would endure in His earthly ministry, culminating in the cross, so we too can be confident that every path into which the Spirit leads us is meant for our good and the good of the service to Christ's Church He intends for us to perform to the end of great eternal reward.

"Whoever serves Me, must follow Me; where I am, there My servant will be also. Whoever serves Me, My Father will honor."

John 12:26

### 5. The Spirit's Empowerment of Christ's Ministry:

But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Matthew 12:28 NIV

Just as all the works of God Jesus did were "vindicated by the Spirit" (1Tim.3:16), so we who belong to Jesus Christ may be confident of the witness of the Spirit to all our words and deeds truly done in His power to the glory of Jesus Christ.

But they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke.

Acts 6:10 NIV

### 6. The Cross:

For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of the heifer sprinkled upon the unclean render a person holy in respect to bodily cleansing, how much more will the blood of Christ, who offered Himself (i.e., His body; cf. 1Pet.3:18) without defect to God through the eternal Spirit, cleanse our conscience from dead works

so that we may serve the living God?  
Hebrews 9:14

As our dear Lord and Savior offered Himself up for our sins and the sins of the entire world "through the eternal Spirit" so that we might be saved, so we are called upon to "share the sufferings of Christ" (Rom.8:17; 2Cor.1:5; Phil.1:29-30; 3:10; Col.1:24; 1Pet.4:12-13; cf. Matt.10:38; 16:24; Mk.8:34; 10:21; 10:38-39; Lk.9:23; 14:27; Acts 5:41; 2Cor.4:10-11; Gal.6:17; 1Thes.1:6; 2Thes.1:4-5; 2Tim.3:12), enduring by means of that same Holy Spirit whatever God calls us to endure as we fight this fight here in the devil's world to the glory of the One who saved us.

"If anyone wants to follow Me, let him [first] deny himself, then pick up his cross and follow Me."  
Matthew 16:24

#### 7. The Proclamation in Hades:

(19) It was also by means of the Spirit that [Christ] visited the [angelic] spirits in prison (i.e., in the Abyss), and proclaimed [His victory]. (20) [These are the angels who] were disobedient in the days of Noah at the time when God patiently waited (i.e., delayed judgment) while the ark was being built.  
1st Peter 3:19-20a

As our Lord was first to announce through the Spirit to the demons imprisoned in the Abyss that His mission had been a success and that their fate was therefore sealed, so we believers, as we grow, as we walk with Christ, and as we perform the ministries He has called us to in the power of the Holy Spirit, are a witness, not only to human beings, but to the angelic world as well.

I charge you before God [the Father], and Christ Jesus, and the elect angels, that you keep to these [commands] without partiality, doing nothing out of favoritism.  
1st Timothy 5:21

. . . and these same things have now been proclaimed to you through those who gave you the gospel through the Holy Spirit, sent from heaven – even angels want to look into these things.  
1st Peter 1:12b

#### 8. The Resurrection of Christ:

(3) [The gospel] which is about [God's] Son, the One who was born of the seed of David according to His flesh, (4) and ordained as God's Son by the power of the Spirit of Holiness through resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Romans 1:3-4

Just as it was through the power of the Holy Spirit that our dear Lord Jesus was resurrected, so we are also confident of that same resurrection, coming at the perfect future time of our Lord's return, accomplished by the same Holy Spirit

who brought our Lord back to life in a perfect eternal body, just as we anticipate (1Jn.3:2).

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Romans 8:11 NASB

Knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you.

2nd Corinthians 4:14 NASB

e. Things to Come:

While the resurrection of the Church at Christ's second advent does mark the end of the Holy Spirit's earthly ministry to the Body of Christ – as from that point on all of us will be eternal forever – scripture assures us of His continuing role in the plan of God throughout the end times and into eternity:

In His sealing of the 144,000 Jewish evangelists (Rev.7:2-8).

In His direction of the tribulational martyrs (Mk.13:11).

In His special empowerment of millennial believers (Joel 2:28-29), especially the house of Israel (Is.32:14-15; 44:3b; 59:20-21; Ezek.36:26-27; 37:14; 39:29; Zech.12:10a).

John, to the seven churches which are in Asia [Minor]: Grace to you and peace from the One who is and was and is coming (i.e., the Father), and from the seven spirits (i.e., the Holy Spirit) which are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth.

Revelation 1:4-5

"And the Spirit and the bride say 'Come [and be saved]!' And let the one who hears say, 'Come [and be saved]!' And let the one who is thirsty come [to salvation]. Let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost."

Revelation 22:17

### **Conclusion:**

(21) Now the One who has given us security in regard to Christ together with you and who has anointed us (i.e., with the Spirit) is God – (22) [Yes, He] has also sealed us and given us His pledge of the Spirit in our hearts.

2nd Corinthians 1:21-22

As we walk forward on the road to Zion this day, we believers, standing between the day of our salvation past and the day of resurrection soon to come, do so in the power, the comfort, and enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. He is the one who

provides us the security and ability to learn the truth respond to it to the glory of the Father in service to Church of Jesus Christ; He is the One who provides the freedom to choose for Christ both initially and throughout our Christian lives. As the verses above remind us, we have been anointed with the Spirit – He dwells in us and we in Christ as a result of His baptism; we have been sealed by Him – we are secure as God's special possession, the Spirit constituting the mark or seal that warns off all unseen attackers; and we can be sure of the coming resurrection and reunion with our dear Lord Jesus – the Spirit Himself acting as the pledge or token of assurance from the Father and the Son that we belong to them and will be with them forever. In that power, in that security, in that assurance – and in the freedom we have in Christ through the Spirit – let us therefore march forward courageously and consistently to the glory of the One who bought us, our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ – in the power of His Holy Spirit.

Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you.

2nd Timothy 1:14 NASB

Then [as My disciples] (v.31) you will know the truth – and ***the truth will free you.***

John 8:32

(16) I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter to be with you forever – (17) ***the Spirit of truth*** whom the world cannot receive, for it neither sees Him, nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He abides with you, and will be in you.

John 14:16-17

But the Encourager, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My Name, that One will teach you all [the truth] and will remind you of all [the truth] which I spoke to you.

John 14:26

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, ***there is freedom.***

2nd Corinthians 3:17 NIV (cf. v.18)

And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit ***is the truth.***

1st John.5:6b

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### **Footnotes:**

1. See part 1 of the *Bible Basics* series, "Theology", section II, "The Persons of God: The Trinity".

2. See section II.A.2 below: "Genesis Gap Restraint of the Devil".

3. See section II.A.3 below: "Pre-Flood Striving of the Spirit".
4. See part 3A of the *Bible Basics* series "Anthropology", section II.1, "The Image and the Likeness of God".
5. See part 4B of the *Bible Basics* series "Soteriology", section I, "God's Plan to Save You".
6. This is covered in section II.A.4 below, "Restraining Antichrist". See also part 2 of the *Satanic Rebellion* series, section II.4, "The Restraining Ministry of the Holy Spirit", and part 2B of the *Coming Tribulation* series, section III, "The Restraining Ministry of the Holy Spirit".
7. Holiness is part of God's perfection or perfect character. See part 1 of the *Bible Basics* series "Theology", section I.B.2, "Holiness".
8. Compare the variation in this title at Romans 1:4: "Spirit of Holiness".
9. Compare the foreshadowing of these separations and fillings or empowerments in the seven days of re-creation delineated in part 5 of the *Satanic Rebellion* series, "The Seven Millennial Days of Human History", section II.8.b, "The Seven Days of Re-Creation".
10. These matters are considered in detail in the five part *Satanic Rebellion* series.
11. These issues are discussed at length in part 3A of this series, "Biblical Anthropology", in section II, "The Creation of Man".
12. For the Spirit's role in the incarnation of our Lord Jesus' humanity, see below section II.C.1, "The Incarnation".
13. See part 5 of the *Satanic Rebellion* series, "Judgment, Restoration and Replacement".
14. See part 5 of the *Satanic Rebellion* series, "Judgment, Restoration and Replacement", section III.1, "Satan's antediluvian attack on the purity of the human line (the Nephilim)".
15. The seven seals belonging to the "Book" in Revelation chapters 5-6 must be released before the Tribulation can begin, and this clearly points to the Spirit as the Agent of restraint (holding back antichrist and the Tribulation) as implied in the idea of sealing: the Spirit is elsewhere described as the "Seven Spirits" (Is.11:2; Rev.1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6), and the sealing ministry of the Spirit is well-attested in other contexts in the New Testament (2Cor.1:22; Eph.1:13; 4:30). For the proofs that the Restrainer here actually is the Holy Spirit, see part 2 of the *Satanic Rebellion* series, section II.4.b.2, "Restraint of the Man of Sin"; and part 2B of the *Coming Tribulation* series, section III.3, "The Restraint of the Man of Lawlessness".



16. See part 13 of *Peter* series, "Sanctification".
17. See part 4B of this series, "Soteriology", section I.2.c, "Sanctification before salvation".
18. To be covered in detail in part 7 of this series, "Bibliology". See also part 11 of the *Peter* series "Natural and Special Revelation".
19. These matters are also covered in detail in part 4B of this series, "Soteriology", section II.6.e, "Faith Epistemology".
20. See part 2A of the *Coming Tribulation* series, section 5.2 under "Christ's Promised Rewards": "I will assuredly not erase his name from the Book of Life".
21. See also part 4B of this series, "Soteriology", section II.7, "Spiritual Rebirth".
22. Since the Spirit is the One who provides the truth, for this reason He is sometimes described in terms of the water of the Word (e.g., Jn.7:38-39). Truth and life are correlatives in the essence of God (independent and applied respectively); and just as physical water is essential for physical life, so it is the truth (water of Word) which is the Spirit's means of providing eternal life. Therefore the life-giving aspect of the Spirit's ministry in the new birth is inextricable from the truth of the Word – the ultimate origin and object of all human freedom from the divine point of view.
23. See part 6 of the *Coming Tribulation* series, section I.5, "Fire upon Magog and the Coastlands".
24. In each and every case in scripture, water-baptism is John's baptism, a ritual of repentance for Jews in anticipation of the coming Messiah. All Israel is assumed to be "of the Lord", and thus water-baptism is a ritual "of repentance" (Mk.1:4; Lk.3:3; Acts 19:4; cf. Acts 2:38) whereby those water-baptized "confess their sins" (Mk.3:6) – in contrast with Spirit baptism which occurs when a person first puts his/her faith in Christ. As such, "baptism" in the New Testament epistles – with the one exception where Paul disavows water-baptism (1Cor.1:14-17), always refers to Spirit baptism. This topic is slated to be covered in detail in part 6B of this series, "Ecclesiology".
25. The sole exceptions are Paul's denigration of the water ritual in 1st Corinthians 1:13-17, and his use of the false practice of "baptism for the dead" to refute the Corinthians' doubts about the resurrection in 1st Corinthians 15:29.
26. I am indebted to Mr. Lynn Murray for instructing me on this point many years ago.
27. See part 4A of this series, "Christology", section I.5.o.2.3, "The Transfer of Believers from the Subterranean Paradise to the Third Heaven".

28. The word "Christian" is probably not original to the Bible. While it does occur in most English versions at Acts 11:26, 26:28, and 1st Peter 4:16, the more probable original reading was *chrestianos*, a pejorative for believers used by unbelievers (as the context in all three passages suggests). This is what the best manuscript of the Bible, Sinaiticus, reads. For more details, please the Ichthys email response, "What does the name 'Christian' mean?".

29. Emphatic καί with connective δέ (Smyth 2891).

30. That is, it is important to point out, what the Greek text here (i.e., *eti ek tes koilias metros autou* – ἔτι ἐκ κοιλιας μητρὸς αὐτοῦ) clearly says and means: "out of" and not "while yet in" (as some versions wrongly have it).

31. That is the thrust of the command to "remain" in the city in Luke 24:49, and should not be taken to apply to their upcoming trip to Galilee in the meantime.

32. These empowerments of the Spirit should also be distinguished from His supernatural restraint of certain individuals at various times to prevent them from acting in a way that would otherwise hinder God's plan and purpose; e.g., Num.24:2; 1Sam.19:20; 19:3. See part 2 of the *Satanic Rebellion* series: "The Genesis Gap", section II.4, "The Restraining Ministry of the Holy Spirit", as well as section I.C above, "The Holy Spirit's Chosen Role in the Plan of God".

33. Jesus Christ is the key to both the biblical idea of "covenant" and God's ultimate "promise" (of salvation). The promise to Adam and Eve of the Seed is linked by Paul in Galatians to the Seed, Jesus Christ, and in Ephesians 2:12, the "promise of the covenants" makes clear that the covenant (*berith*) is the key to the idea of the promise of salvation. Elsewhere, the promise is tied to the Spirit which is part and parcel of our new salvation relationship with Jesus Christ based upon the fulfillment of the promise of the coming of the Seed (and His subsequent work on the cross): cf. Jer.31:1ff.; Is.55:1; Joel 2:28; Is.44:3 Tit.1:2. As our Lord Himself said at the last supper: "**this** is the New Covenant **in my blood**". Now that the promise has become a reality, instead of the old shadow covenant, we have been given the new covenant, a covenant of Spirit and truth, with a new regime (*oikonomia*) based on the Person promised since the promise has been fulfilled in the coming and in the victory of the Person of Christ. It is because of that victory that the Holy Spirit can be given as promised based on the victory of the One who was promised (2Cor.3:5-6).

34. The timing of the giving of the gift of the Spirit, i.e., at Pentecost, is significant. Not only could the gift not be given until after the ascension (cf. Acts 2:33; cf. Jn.16:7), but in the Jewish ceremonial calendar, the festival of Pentecost actually symbolizes the Church Age (so that it was appropriate and inevitable for the Church Age to start on the day of Pentecost). See part 5 of the *Satanic Rebellion* series, section II.8.c, "The Jewish Ceremonial Calendar".

35. Although this is not the proper place to delve into the issue in detail, it should be pointed out that water-baptism has nothing whatsoever to do either with the

gift of the Holy Spirit or with salvation. Note that the assembled believers upon whom the Spirit came received Him independently of any use of water; note too that these believers were never re-water-baptized (so that John's baptism is, in reality, the only legitimate water-baptism, an anticipation of the coming of the Messiah who had now already come, died, been resurrected, and had ascended to heaven); and note finally that Peter's words in this passage do not tie water-baptism to salvation: the comma in the version quoted above is not in the Greek (repentance, a change of heart leading to faith in Christ, is what results in salvation).

36. In regard to Ananias' words at Acts 22:16, "Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (NKJV), we may say 1) that Ananias was concerned to give Paul the gospel under the natural assumption that at this point he was still an unbeliever, 2) that water-baptism was still considered appropriate for the community of faith (it would be some time until even Peter recognized its superfluousness after the cross (cf. Acts 10:47), and 3) that the operative phrase here is "[by] calling on the Name of the Lord" (the Greek circumstantial participle expressing the means whereby one's sins are forgiven – the expression of faith in Christ).

37. The water-baptism Peter allows hereafter (Acts 10:48), was, as the context demonstrates, an after-thought – and an unnecessary one. Peter wants these new gentile believers to feel included, and water-baptism, John's baptism, had been a salient feature of the disciples' prior experience. It was clearly unnecessary here for the reception of the Holy Spirit inasmuch as the Spirit had already been poured out in a visibly miraculous way. Just as Peter failed to understand the imminent flooding into the Church of the gentiles (and had required detailed tutelage by the Spirit to prepare him for Cornelius' request), so he would temporarily retain this and other now obsolete ideas (cf. Gal.2:14), as he navigated the transitional period from Law to grace documented in the book of Acts (a historical book which describes accurately what did actually happen, as opposed to endorsing all behavior it records as prescriptive for the Church).

38. For the interpretation of the seven churches, and Laodicea in particular, see part 2A of the *Coming Tribulation* series: "The Seven Churches of Revelation".

39. As discussed above, David's prayer in Psalm 51:11 not to lose the Spirit is something believers of this age need not be concerned about: the only way for a believer to lose the indwelling of the Spirit is to stop being a believer.

40. Acts 12:25: "Paul and Barnabas . . . having *fulfilled* (*pleroo*, πληρώω) their ministry (i.e., the first missionary journey).

41. See part 3B of the *Bible Basics* series "Hamartiology", section IV.6, "Apostasy and the Sin unto Death".

42. It should be pointed out here that "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit" is not a sin which a believer is capable of committing (Matt.12:31; Mk.3:29). Rather, as

the context of Mark 3:29 makes clear, it is committed by an unbeliever who attributes the gospel truth which the Spirit is graciously communicating to him to the devil instead (cf. Mk.3:30: "because they said, 'He has an unclean spirit' " NKJV).

43. I.e., apostasy. Please see part 3B of the *Bible Basics* series "Hamartiology", section IV.6, "Apostasy and the Sin unto Death".

44. Covered in part 4B of the *Bible Basics* series "Soteriology", section II.6.e, "Faith Epistemology".

45. For more on the distinction between *gnosis* and *epignosis* in the context of spiritual growth, see part 4B of the *Bible Basics* series "Soteriology", section II.7.c.3.d, "The need to transform our thinking".

46. The same Greek word (*synkrino*) is used here as was the case in 1st Corinthians 2:13 explained above: "communicating (lit., "mixing") spiritual information to (with) spiritual people".

47. Rejection of the Spirit's testimony to the saving truth about our Lord and His death for us all is thus "blasphemy", because it amounts to calling the Spirit a liar; see above, section II.B.1.d.2, "Gospel Epistemology".

48. The Greek word here, *dianoia* (διανοία), derived from the preposition *dia* and the word for "mind" (*nous*), has the general sense of the organ of mental perception or "intellectual vision" (cf. Plutarch, *Pericles* 1.3). In biblical terms, this means the heart now free at spiritual rebirth to be receptive to the Spirit's communication of the truth. We find a similar usage at 2nd Peter 3:1.

49. Tithing was a form of national taxation for the theocratic state of ancient Israel and is not commanded for believers today.

50. "Moving mountains", though clearly a reference to Matthew 17:20, is not meant to describe the function of the gift but the degree to which the gift is possessed, that is, possessing the gift of faith "to an unlimited degree".

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