

Theology for Life

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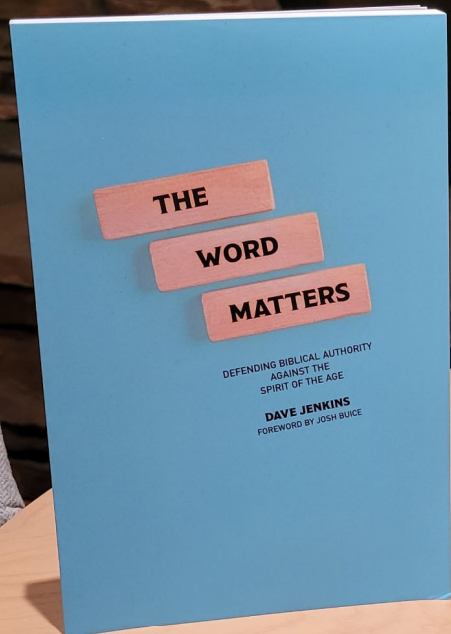
WHO IS THE *Holy Spirit?*

A THEOLOGICAL EXAMINATION OF HIS PERSON AND WORK

Inside this Issue...

- **What is the Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit?**
- **The Holy Spirit and Making Decisions**
- **The Christian and the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit**

In ***The Word Matters***, Dave Jenkins takes readers by the hand and helps them understand how serious the issue of biblical authority is and how the Bible is under attack, so that they can stand with confidence on the Word of God.

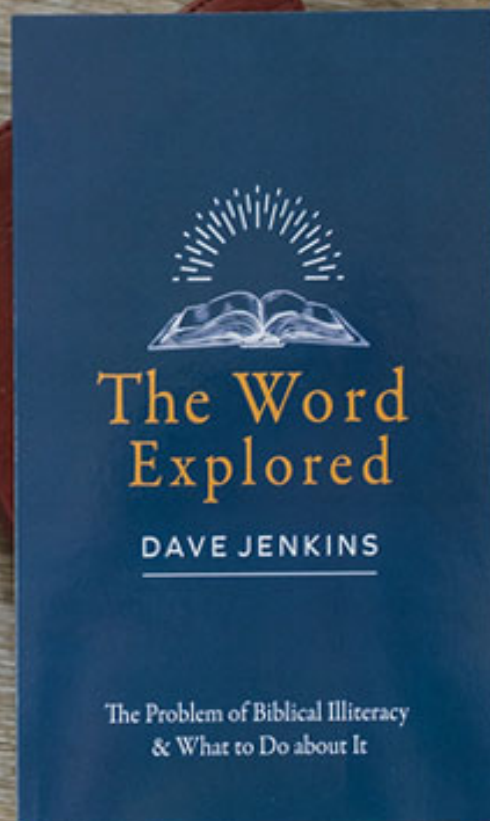


The Word Matters

DEFENDING BIBLICAL AUTHORITY
AGAINST THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE



Grow in your relationship with God!



*The Word Explored:
The Problem of
Biblical Illiteracy &
What to Do about It*
is an easy-to-read,
biblically-based work
for lay-people and
pastors alike.



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Editor's Corner

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As we examine the topic of the Holy Spirit, there's a lot that one can say in regard to this topic, not only as a whole but also how it is under attack. In the past decade or more, we've seen the rise of Bethel Church in Redding, California, as well Bethel Music, among their other ministries. We have also seen the rise of the New Apostolic Reformation (N.A.R.), which emphasizes "hearing from the Lord" outside of the Scriptures, as well as the establishment of "apostolic networks".

One of the most important truths that any Christian can consider is that he/she can know the Lord as He is revealed in the Word. As Christians, the Holy Spirit (according to Jesus' explanation in John 15-16) teaches us the truth about what is in the Word. The Reformers and the Puritans were men and women who wrote a great deal in regards to defining the Holy Spirit's person and work. For example, the Genevan Reformer, John Calvin, is considered the theologian of the Holy Spirit. John Owen, the Prince of Puritans, also wrote a great deal on the person and work of the Holy Spirit in his ministry. Both of these men's works are often incorporated into modern-day Ortho-

dox Evangelical doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

Today our churches need to return to this understanding of who the Holy Spirit is and His work in the life of the Christian. We need to know these realities first from the Word of God, but we also must understand a bit about what the Church has taught regarding the Holy Spirit.

We know that we are living in times where people claim, “the Holy Spirit told me”, and they have dreams, “words”, and “visions”. As you will see in this Issue of *Theology for Life Magazine*, the Holy Spirit is 100% knowable. He is God and He has revealed Himself in the inspired, inerrant, clear, sufficient, and binding Word of God. So, as you read the pages of this magazine, get ready to dig ever deeper into who the Holy Spirit is, what the Holy Spirit is aiming to do in your own life (and in the life of others), and in and through the Church for His glory and honor.

In Christ Alone,

Dave Jenkins

Executive Editor, *Theology for Life Magazine*

The Christian and the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

By Dave Jenkins

Jesus taught His followers that the world cannot receive Him because they *“cannot see or know him”* (John

14:17). The world *“cannot receive”* the truth about Jesus be-

cause it follows Satan’s lies (John 8:44-45; 14:30). The world cannot *“see him nor know him”* because it fails to acknowledge the Spirit (Matthew 12:22-37; Acts 2:12-17). William Hendrickson remarks, *“The Holy Spirit guides his people into the truth which is embodied in Christ and his redemption.”*

Ephesians 1:13-14 says, *“In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of*



his glory.”

What is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit? What do we have to do to “get” the Holy Spirit, and what does it mean for the person who has the Holy Spirit? These are vital spiritual questions for those searching the Bible for answers to life! Paul wrote the above passage to the Church in Ephesus. In it, he explained the process of becoming “indwelt” by the Holy Spirit:

They listened to the gospel.

They believed in the gospel.

Two parts. They listened and believed. That’s it! When we hear and believe the gospel, our hearts break open at God’s love, mercy, and forgiveness, and the Spirit of God Himself comes inside our hearts! It is amazing, simple, and mysterious all at once!

The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit is a Promise

Paul tells us that the Holy Spirit comes into a believer as a seal of promise. But the promise of what? *Philippians 1:6* states, “For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work among you will complete it by the day of Christ Jesus.”

The moment we are brought into faith and the Holy Spirit comes into our lives, that *very moment* we become part of His work and plan, and He promises that He will complete the good work He started in us. That good work consists of personal callings and growth, but also general work that God desires to accomplish in every believer’s heart. Below are some examples:

- *Ephesians 2:10*, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”
- *Philippians 2:13*, “...For God is the one working among you both the willing and the working for what pleases him.”
- 1 *Thessalonians 5:23*, “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you en-

tirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass."

- *2 Corinthians 1:20, "For as many are the promises of God, in Him they are yes, therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us."*
- *2 Thessalonians 1:11-12, "To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ."*

The work God has for us to do, and the work He has to accomplish in us, for our good and His glory, is part of the promise we receive when the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts.

The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit is a Pledge

Paul tells us the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is a pledge. But a pledge of what? It has to do with our inheritance as children of God.

- *2 Corinthians 1:21-22, "Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge."*
- *2 Corinthians 5:5, "Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge."*
- *Hebrews 9:15, "For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance."*
- *1 Peter 3:1-5, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who*

according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

These verses reveal what our inheritance and pledge from the Holy Spirit mean to us. The word *pledge* in Greek often refers to a partial down payment.

"The Holy Spirit inside believers isn't just meant as a promissory note for Heaven, but empowers us through all of our daily lives now."

And the fulfillment of our inheritance is when we go home to live the rest of eternity in completion (no more wrestling against our sin and the sin of those around us) in heaven.

In the here and now, the Holy Spirit works in us and sanctifies us, but one day we will wake up to the soul-fulfillment of seeing God's face and reflecting on Him just as we were always

designed to. The Holy Spirit inside us is the good-faith marker Jesus leaves with us until the day He comes and gets us, either through the completion of our days here on Earth or as He comes to get all His children.

The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit is Power

The Holy Spirit inside believers isn't just meant as a promissory note for Heaven, but empowers us through all of our daily lives now.

- John 14:26, *"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 that I said to you."*
- Luke 12:11, *"When they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and*

the authorities, do not worry about how or what you are to speak in your defense, or what you are to say; for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."

- *Acts 1:8, "...But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth..."*
- *Romans 15:13, "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."*
- *1 Thessalonians 1:6, "...For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction..."*

As we walk our journey of faith daily the Holy Spirit through the Word of God is conforming us more into the image of the Lord Jesus.

"Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen" (Ephesians 3:20).

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William Hendrickson, New Testament Commentary: The Gospel of John (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker House, 1953), 277.

What is the Baptism of the Holy Spirit?

By Dave Jenkins



As we look at the 20th century it is hard to deny the influence of the movement that began in large part at the Azusa Street Revival and quickly blossomed into

the charismatic and Pentecostal movement. With that movement has come discussion on the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, both in popular and academic works, along with the claims of Pentecostal theology that the sign-gifts of healing, prophecy, and speaking in tongues are for today. The focus of this article and this issue of *Theology for Life* is not on the question of whether the sign-gifts are for today or not. The question before us in this article is, “What

is the baptism of the Holy Spirit?"

The idea behind the baptism of the Holy Spirit is the claim by Pentecostal and charismatic theologians that believers receive a *second* work of the Spirit after conversion. Now, the true Christian—at the moment of conversion—is sealed by the Spirit and given gifts to use for the glory of God. The “baptism” of the Spirit, according to what the Pentecostal denominations teach, is that one can be a believer without having the Spirit, or at least without having Him in all of His fullness. And thus, according to their teachings, the believer must pray to receive the Holy Spirit and/or His “second blessing” of spiritual gifts.

Now, the belief in the “second work of the Spirit” comes mostly from anecdotal (or personal) experience and some from the Book of Acts. As some people read Acts, they see that God promised to send the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles

“What we can state at the outset is that all of our teachings and doctrines must be first and foremost grounded in and shaped by the Word, not primarily feelings or emotions.”

who were already Christians (Acts 1:1-11). So, they read of the Spirit’s outpouring of the gift of tongues that occurred on that first Pentecost (post Christ’s ascension, in Acts 2:1-3) and conclude that this sequence of events demonstrates that the “second baptism” of the Spirit is normative for Christians throughout the Church (and all of Church history).

Additionally, the book of Acts records some believers as receiving the Holy Spirit after having been disciples for some time (Acts 19:1-7). This is also taken by Pentecostals as evidence for a post-conversion “baptism of the Spirit”, in which the laying on of hands and prayer for the Holy Spirit to fill a believer is a requirement. The central issue that causes concern is whether this experience or teaching is biblically faithful and theologically

accurate.

What we can state at the outset is that all of our teachings and doctrines must be first and foremost grounded in and shaped by the Word, not primarily feelings or emotions. Human beings often deceive themselves (Jeremiah 17:9), so we need to be Bereans (Acts 17:11) and test all things by the Word (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

Earlier, I mentioned how Pentecostals perceive the baptism of the Holy Spirit from certain texts in the book of Acts. To those in this denomination, these texts seem to indicate that some disciples did not receive the indwelling and empowering of the Holy Spirit until sometime much later after conversion. Acts 2 is one text where we see the Holy Spirit coming upon the disciples after they had been following Jesus. In Acts 19:1-7, we read of people in Ephesus who had been disciples for a while without having received the Holy Spirit. According to the text, they had never even heard of the Holy Spirit. It's possible that they, being a distance from Jerusalem, had not yet heard of Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, and were merely disciples of Christ's rabbinical teachings, therefore they needed to hear the rest of the good news and believe.

However, when taking the narrative in Acts and seeking to make it normative for every Christian, can lead to error. The history recorded within the Book of Acts details a time in Church history that was foundational to the start of the global Church body, with many events never recurring again (Ephesians 2:19-22). Jesus' own words in Acts 1:8 explain that the disciples (Christians) will receive power from the Holy Spirit to take the gospel to the end of the earth. So, if we follow how people are saved and indwelt by the Spirit in Acts, we see that they follow the geographical sequence described in Acts 1:8. Baptisms occur in Jerusalem/Judea (Acts 2; 10), Samaria (Acts 8:14-17), and Ephe-

sus (the ends of the earth; Acts 19:1-7). This confirms that the gospel would go to the areas Jesus describes in Acts 1:8. Spirit baptisms were evidence to the Early Church that the gospel would go forward, and not meant to be example of the normative Christian experience.

Please allow me to add some clarity to my first point about Spirit baptism. When the Apostles addressed Spirit baptism in the Epistles, it is describing as a universal experience and not one that only certain believers enjoy (or would receive a “second blessing” or second outpouring of), as if they are “super Christians”. Paul states in 1 Corinthians 12:13 that every Christian is baptized into one Spirit and into one Body (i.e., the Body of Christ). So, Paul knows of no group of *Christians* who have not been filled with the Holy Spirit.

One of the main arguments against the idea of a second blessing of the Holy Spirit is the idea of a “Christian caste system”, by which one divides local churches into those who “have the Spirit” versus “those who do not”. This idea, however, separates what the Lord has united, leading to a lot of issues including disunity in the body and a superiority mindset in some Christians, which is contrary to how Christians are to regard themselves (Philippians 2:5-11). Since all Christians are united to the Lord Jesus Christ, they are His, and He is theirs. Every Christian has the Holy Spirit, which means no Christian needs a *special experience* as touted by the concept of the “second blessing of the Spirit”.

For the Christian, the baptism of the Holy Spirit occurs at conversion (1 Corinthians 6:19; 12:13). The baptism of the Spirit is not necessarily accompanied by the gift of tongues, and it would be fair to say that most Christians don’t speak in tongues when they receive Christ. The word *baptism* means “to dip in or immerse”. When Christians receive Christ, they are immersed (baptized) fully by the Holy Spirit into Christ and into the family of God (Romans 6:1-10).

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is received by faith in Christ alone. Baptism automatically follows salvation, placing Christians in Christ and sealing them

permanently into the family of God, which is Paul's point in Colossians 2:12. The new Christian is now in Christ. The baptism in the Spirit is permanent and is bestowed at conversion, never to be repeated (Acts 2:38). There is no biblical

Notice how Paul says *"we were all baptized"* by the Spirit— all believers have received the baptism, synonymous with salvation...

text that suggests that Christians are to seek a "second blessing" of the Holy Spirit, because they already have the full/complete blessing of the Holy Spirit, received at the time of their conversion.

What we know about the baptism of the Holy Spirit is that the Spirit of God places the Christian in Christ and into union with other believers at the moment of salvation. John the Baptist pre-

dicted the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:8). In fact, Jesus Himself predicted the baptism of the Holy Spirit before He ascended into heaven (Acts 1:5). The promise of the baptism of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4), and for the first time in redemptive history, people were permanently indwelt by the Spirit when the Church began.

One text that is central in this discussion on the baptism of the Holy Spirit is 1 Corinthians 12:12-13:

"For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body— Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit."

Notice how Paul says *"we were all baptized"* by the Spirit— all believers have received the baptism, synonymous with salvation, so it is not a special experience for only a few. While Romans 6:1-4 does not mention the Holy Spirit, it

is describing the Christians position before God. So, we can say that 1 Corinthians 12:13 states that every Christian has been baptized, just as they have been given the indwelling of the Spirit. What this means is that nowhere in Scripture are Christians told to *be* baptized with, in, or by the Spirit, or to *seek* the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Also, Ephesians 4:5 refers to Spirit baptism, which is the reality for every Christian, just as “one faith” and “one Father” are likewise.

Scripture does, however, teach Christians to seek to be filled with the Spirit in Ephesians 5:18 which says, “*Do not get drunk on wine ... Instead, be filled with the Spirit.*” The idea behind “be filled” is one of “keep on being filled” with the Holy Spirit. The filling of the Holy Spirit is not permanent like our baptism into the Spirit at conversion, but it (the filling of the Spirit) is to be repeated, again and again. The true Christian is to live a life submitted to the Lordship of Christ, and as such be saturated by and living under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

In summary, we can know two things about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The first is that the Spirit joins the Christian to the body of Christ and brings us to new life in the Lord. Being *in the Lord* means we are risen with Christ to newness of life (Romans 6:4). Every Christian should exercise their spiritual gifts to keep the body functioning properly (1 Corinthians 12:13). Experiencing the one Spirit baptism serves as the basis for keeping unity in the Church (Ephesians 4:5). Secondly, being associated with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection through Spirit baptism establishes the basis for the Christian’s separation from the power of indwelling sin and his/her walking in newness of life (Romans 6:1-10; Colossians 2:12).

“Every Christian should exercise their spiritual gifts to keep the body functioning properly...”

The Holy Spirit and Preaching

By Scott Hurst

A preacher is a herald of Jesus.

His task is to proclaim that the Seed of David struck down “Goliath” (death) and is now calling us to follow Him and enjoy the spoils of His victory. The preacher is to announce that God has chosen to “*pass over*” us because the Lamb has been slain, and now calls



us to rejoice and remember this great redemption. He is to press home that the curtain has been torn and no longer divides us from God because Jesus—our great High Priest—has gone before us and made a way for us. And every preacher is to call for repentance from sin and faith in Jesus.

A preacher's task is to proclaim the Biblical gospel in all its beauty and apply it to all of life. This is a joyful burden. To be faithful to Christ and helpful to the Church as they carry this burden, preachers need to depend on the Holy Spirit in preparation, in the preaching moment, and in the aftermath of the sermon.

In Preparation: Be Diligent and Learn Obedience

Two people come to mind when I think of preparing to preach: Timothy and Ezra. In 2 Timothy 2:15, Paul says, *"Be diligent to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who doesn't need to be ashamed, correctly teaching the word of truth."*

"Spirit-dependent preparation is not about having something to say."

Timothy's work, among many things, involved confronting false teachers, correcting wayward church members, and holding the line on fidelity to the Apostolic gospel. His work requires him to depend on the Holy Spirit and to be diligent in his study. Paul put these two together just a few sentences before: *"Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything"* (2 Timothy 2:7). His absolute dependence on the Holy Spirit pushed him deeper into study.

However, we should never clothe a neglect of preparation with platitudes about depending on the Spirit. "We have urgent need to study," Spurgeon told his students, "for the teacher of others must be instructed." [1] To be faithful and helpful in our preaching, we need to steep ourselves in the Scriptures. As we use our minds to puzzle through and contemplate God's Word, the Holy Spirit reveals the glories of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In Timothy, we see diligence in preparation. In Ezra, we see the vital con-

nection between our public preaching and our walk with the Lord. I love the crisp summary of Ezra as a teacher in Ezra 7:10: *"Now Ezra had determined in his heart to study the law of the Lord, obey it, and teach its statutes and ordinances in Israel."* It is easy and tempting to study each week simply because you need to say something on Sunday morning. Ezra shows us the crucial link between our study and our teaching: obedience.

For preaching to be helpful, we need to call people to obedience, which is an exhortation to walk by the Spirit. For preaching to be faithful, we need to keep in step with the Spirit and then say, *"Follow me as I follow Christ"* (Galatians 5:25; 1 Corinthians 11:1). Jesus goes before His disciples in bearing the cross. Preachers, as pastors, must be examples to the church and therefore should never say "Do as I say, not as I do." Pastoral leadership "involves following Jesus personally and inviting others to follow you as you walk in the ways of the Chief Shepherd."^[2]

Spirit-dependent preparation is not about having something to say. Sermon preparation is personal formation. As preachers sit with the text, wrestle to understand it, and work hard to think of poignant applications and clear illustrations, the Holy Spirit works on the preacher. Ezra studied, obeyed, and then he preached. Preachers depend on the Holy Spirit in the study by being diligent and learning obedience.

In the Pulpit: Be Biblical, Point to Christ, and Be Clear

If you are going to depend on the Holy Spirit in preaching, you must root your preaching in the Spirit-inspired Scriptures. The author of Hebrews prefaced a quote from Psalm 95 with *"Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says"* (Hebrews 3:7). In his commentary, David Allen says this has at least three implications: "(1) the Holy Spirit speaks in Scripture; (2) the Holy Spirit spoke through Scripture

to the author's original audience; and (3) the Holy Spirit speaks to God's people today through this text when they read these words." [3] What Scripture says is what the Holy Spirit says. If we want our churches to be Spirit-led, preach the Bible.

Spirit-empowered preaching exalts Christ. When Jesus tells His disciples what the Holy Spirit will do, He says, *"He will glorify me, because he will take from what is mine and declare it to you"* (John 16:14).

The Holy Spirit's aim to glorify Christ pairs with His ministry of maturing the Church. Paul puts these together in 2 Corinthians. First, he says, *"We all, with unveiled faces, are looking as in a mirror at, the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit"* (2 Corinthians 3:18). Then he applies it: *"Therefore, since we have this ministry because we were shown mercy, we do not give up. Instead, we have renounced secret and shameful things, not acting deceitfully or distorting the word of God, but commending ourselves before God to everyone's conscience by an open display of the truth... For we are not proclaiming ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus's sake. For God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ"* (2 Corinthians 4:1-2, 5-6).

Preaching that depends on the Holy Spirit will aim to make Christ fully known because that is the Holy Spirit's means for making the people of God fully mature. I believe this means that one of our primary aims in preaching must be clarity.

People want to know what the Bible has to say on life's most important matters. People in our churches want to follow Christ by faith, they want to glorify God by a long obedience, and preaching with clarity helps them do that. Preachers love the Church well by showing the clarity of the text, by providing

clarity on confusing passages, and by stating the implications and applications of the Bible simply and concretely. Good preaching applies the truth of the Bible to the lives of the listeners with boldness, love, and clarity.

In the Aftermath: Be Prayerful

We cannot force God's work on people. The Holy Spirit is the one who awakens faith, sanctifies, gives every believer gifts for building up the Church, and—as the seal of God's favour—keeps us faithful to the end.[4] We cannot force the work of God, but we can trust that God is working.

I'm trying to read through Calvin's *Institutes* this year, and this paragraph I read recently reminded me why prayer and preaching must go together.

"But our mind has such an inclination to vanity that it can never cleave fast to the truth of God; and it has such a dullness that it is always blind to the light of God's truth. Accordingly, without the illumination of the Holy Spirit, the Word can do nothing. From this, also, it is clear that faith is much higher than human understanding. And it will not be enough for the mind to be illumined by the Spirit of God unless the heart is also strengthened and supported by his power."[5]

Everything I aim to accomplish through the ministry of the Word is ultimately accomplished through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the pastoral call is to be faithful in preaching the word and diligent in prayer. Spurgeon told his students, "Abundant prayer must go with earnest preaching."[6] The Apostles said it first, "*But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word*" (Acts 6:4). Prayerful proclamation of the truth is the pattern for Spirit-dependant gospel preaching.

In Everything Be Yourself

After a sermon a few years ago, a friend made an off-handed comment about how I almost made a perfect John Piper-like adjective stack. Often young preachers sound more like their influences than themselves. While we should always aim to learn from the best preachers, remember to be yourself. The Holy Spirit is the one who called you to preach where you are today.

“In the aftermath, be confidently prayerful that God will be faithful to His Word...”

Paul lays down the weightiness of pastoral duty for the Ephesian elders by reminding them that the Holy Spirit called them to the office. *“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood”* (Acts 20:28). If God

would bring John Piper to my church, he then I can be myself when I preach. Brother Preacher, this gives incredible assurance and freedom to be yourself.

By being yourself, you testify that the Holy Spirit doesn't make mistakes. Pastoral preaching is a spiritual ministry carried out in weakness and full dependence on the Holy Spirit. Apart from the Holy Spirit, no one is sufficient for the work. Therefore, brothers of the pulpit, in your preparation, be diligent to study and obey (walk by the Spirit). In the pulpit be clear, be Biblical, and always be about Jesus (align with the Spirit's aim). In the aftermath, be confidently prayerful that God will be faithful to His Word (trust the Spirit's work). And be yourself (preach with the assurance of the Spirit's

call).

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How the Holy Spirit is Under Attack Today

By Jacob Tanner



Is the Holy Spirit under attack today? Absolutely, and in a plethora of ways. One need look no further than the almost total inability of most Christians in the West to articulate who the Holy Spirit even is. Some incorrectly assume that the Holy Spirit is like some sort of impersonal force by which

God seemingly empowers Christians to do different things. Others regularly refer to Him (the Holy Spirit) as an “it”, when He clearly possesses Personhood. Yet others fail to think of Him as fully God, though that is exactly who He is as the Third Person of the Trinity. Others, to try and bring the knowledge of God down to our creaturely level, attempt to create a hierarchy where none exists, demanding that the Holy Spirit be viewed at the bottom of that Godhead hierarchy.

This is not meant to scaremonger or guilt the reader into believing that they have not done enough study on the Person of the Holy Spirit. Rather, this is meant to be a wakeup call for the Christian to love, fear, and revere the Holy Spirit just as much as we do the Father and the Son.

“If we want to defend the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and who He is, we need to make sure we stand upon the shoulders of those who have come before.”

At the same time, we must not make the mistake of believing that the statement that “the Holy Spirit is under attack” somehow means that the Holy Spirit may somehow be “defeated” by the sins and errors of man. The Holy Spirit is God, just like the Father and Son. And as God, He is in no danger of being defeated. However, because we desire to glorify our Triune God, it is essential we love and revere Him by learning who He is and articulating this rightly.

2,000 Years of Church History

If we want to defend the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and who He is, we need to make sure we stand upon the shoulders of those who have come before. No man is an island, and it is simply impossible to interpret the Scriptures in a vacuum. In 1 Corinthians 10:11, Paul writes of the Old Testament saints that,

“Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.” If the Old (and New) Testament saints were given as examples to us, then should we not look to the saints throughout church history in the same way? They agonized over how to come to a biblical understanding of the Holy Spirit. Should we not pay heed to their instruction and work?

For nearly two millennia, the biblical doctrine of the Trinity has been formulated and articulated within our creeds and confessions. Within the *Athanasius Creed*, for example, we have been gifted one of the finest pieces of Christian literature ever created, explaining with the highest degree of accuracy and biblical scrutiny how God is One in Essence, yet Three in Persons. The one who ignores and denies the grand tradition of Christian scholarship and pastoral writings on the doctrine of the Trinity does not merely harm themselves, but all whom they influence. The nourishment of the Body of Christ depends upon Christians who not only study the Bible, but also utilize the resources that God has gifted His Bride, the Church, over the past two thousand years.

Consider, just as one example of many, how the *Athanasius Creed* begins:

That we worship one God in trinity and the trinity in unity, neither blending their persons nor dividing their essence.

For the person of the Father is a distinct person, the person of the Son is another, and that of the Holy Spirit still another.

But the divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is

one, their glory equal, their majesty coeternal.

We very quickly discover within the creed that the Holy Spirit is, in fact, God. He is part of the Trinity. He shares the essence of the Father and the Son—not in the sense that He has 33% of the essence, and the other two Persons share the other two-thirds. Rather, each as a Person contains the fulness of deity and essence so that it can truly be said that God is One, not composed of parts or divisions, and yet, mysteriously, Three Persons.

Unfortunately, many today fail to make use of resources like the *Athanasius Creed*, and so become functional and theoretical heretics as they mistakenly deny a number of truths about the Triune God, or add to God some creaturely attributes. Some, in an effort to be as noble as they may possibly be, openly claim that they hold to “no creed but Christ!”—ironically failing to realize that such a sentiment is, in fact, a creed. The truth, however, is that we need the Creeds. We need to return to them.

The Biblical Record

In Matthew 12:31, Jesus clearly warns that, “*Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.*” We can easily deduce from this text that the Holy Spirit is, in fact, a Person, else there would be no way to sin against Him. But, at the same time, the clear warning is that to blaspheme the Spirit is to blaspheme God, and this sin is unforgivable. Many pages could be written on this, but suffice to say for now that the way we speak and think of the Holy Spirit clearly matters a great deal.

The trouble is that a good deal of people today show no reverence or respect to the Spirit of God. Within the Word of Faith and charismatic movements especially, there is a clear disregard for His authority and power. People treat

Him like He is a tool or weapon that can be bought, sold, and used to get ahead in life. They have effectively become like Simon the Magician, who tried to purchase the Holy Spirit for his own unjust means:

“Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money, saying, “Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.” But Peter said to him, “May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.” And Simon answered, “Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me”” (Acts 8:18-24).

The Holy Spirit cannot be bought, sold, twisted, or manipulated to suit some charlatan’s propaganda. He is a Person, yes, but He is also God. As God, He possesses the sovereign authority and power to do as He pleases. To lie to

Him or about Him may even result in death (Acts 5:4, 9).

“Speaking of His work, we would do well to pay attention to what the Bible actually tells us the Holy Spirit does.”

We must not be as those who twist the Word of God and try to take advantage of people’s ignorance by rewriting the doctrine of the Holy Spirit to satisfy unjust gains. When people claim to be

Christians and then practice things like

“grave soaking” (laying on the graves of departed saints to “suck” their Spirit energy away), laughing fits whereby they claim to have fallen under the joy of the Holy Spirit, or even knocking people to the ground in some sort of Jedi

Force-like attack, are they not attacking the very Person and work of the Holy Spirit?

Speaking of His work, we would do well to pay attention to what the Bible actually tells us the Holy Spirit does. It has also been noted within the Creeds, extrapolating information from the biblical record, that the Holy Spirit is very active in our salvation. For example, when we consider the Covenant of Redemption, it is right to say that the Father planned our salvation, the Son purchased our salvation, and the Spirit now applies our salvation to us (Ephesians 1:13-14). He convicts us of sin (John 16:8-11). It is also right to say that, when we come to faith in Christ, we come because the Holy Spirit spiritually enlivens us to come to Christ (John 6:44). The Holy Spirit now indwells and fills us, working the process of sanctification within us (Philippians 1:6; John 16:12-15).

We must be certain that what we think and say of the Holy Spirit is, in fact, biblical and true. Anything less (or more) is to attack Him—and remember: the Holy Spirit is God.

What is the Role of the Holy Spirit in Apologetics?

By Dave Van Bebber



The discipline of apologetics is one of academic rigor and intellectual depth. Often, individuals who find themselves immersed in the study of apologetics, and even attempting to strengthen their apologetic arguments, be

they classical or presuppositional, will appeal to intellectual arguments. This is rational, of course, and in line with the Christian worldview. Further, all individuals involved in the biblical application of apologetics agree that manipulating emotions or any coercive ploys are unacceptable in defending the Christian faith.

For good reasons, apologists study effective argumentation, inductive arguments, deductive arguments, and persuasion when learning the discipline of apologetics. However, in the rigorous advancement of apologetic training,

“Christians recognize that when preaching the gospel, it is not eloquence...that allows one to present the gospel clearly...”

Christians must remember that the Christian worldview affirms spiritual and supernatural realities. Christians do not believe that arguments and logic are the foundational means by which someone comes to salvation. Likewise, even those with different positions on the doctrine of salvation and election, and those

with various orthodox views of God's sovereignty in salvation, recognize that human beings do not come to faith in Christ because of a valid and sound intellectual argument alone.

While Christians *“take every thought captive to obey Christ”* and *“destroy arguments”* (2 Corinthians 10:5), they are not called to just intellectual combat. Paul contends that the forces Christians oppose are *“spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places”* (Ephesians 6:12). So, for one to look at apologetics as merely an intellectual endeavor or task is to fail to account for the reality that Christians serve a transcendent God who works out salvation in a supernatural way. Because of the spiritual and supernatural presuppositions of the Christian worldview, apologists should consider the role of the Holy Spirit in defense of the Christian faith. In engaging this concept, we will examine six critical components of the Holy Spirit's role in apologetics.

The Holy Spirit Empowers

Christians recognize that when preaching the gospel, it is not eloquence, argumentation, or persuasiveness that allows one to present the gospel clearly

(Matthew 10:19-20; Luke 21:14-15; John 14:26). From the Christian worldview, it is the Holy Spirit empowers one for service (Numbers 27:18; Deuteronomy 34:9). As John Frame notes, “the spirit gives fresh power for ministry.” The very fact that one desires to defend and proclaim the gospel is only a result of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:15-17). Therefore, the foundation of apologetics is the reality that God's Spirit moves in the lives of God's people. Because of the movement of God's Spirit, those who are not God's people come to salvation.

Apologetics is more than just winning arguments. Apologetics is being empowered by the Holy Spirit to put forth a defense logically, theologically, and supernaturally, a cohesive life and worldview that demonstrates the only logical

“Defending the Christian faith against doubters who are non-believers is not the sole purpose of Christian Apologetics.”

and consistent explanation for how the world truly is the biblical explanation of reality. It is not because a person is so intelligent that they arrive at this position either; that mentality directly contradicts the gospel. God's word teaches that a person comes to salvation not because of anything he or she has done, but because of what God has done. Therefore, a person

who comes to salvation can only declare salvation because Christ has given salvation. The Holy Spirit gives one the understanding to make the arguments that answer any opposition to the Christian worldview.

The Holy Spirit Convicts a Person of Sin

A fundamental presupposition of a Christian is that since believers deal with spiritual realities and not physical realities, it is only a spiritual and supernatural agent that allows a person to feel a moral conviction about sin. In other words, since the Christian worldview affirms spiritual realities and ethical ac-

tions, and standards are spiritual and immaterial things, a Christian's point of contact with non-believers is based on the Holy Spirit—a spiritual being who instills moral conviction. This is consistent with what Jesus Christ said in John 16:8-11, where He promises that the Holy Spirit will convict people of unrighteousness. Here, Christ clarifies that the Holy Spirit actively convicts all humanity of sin. Moral absolutes result from the fact that human beings live in the God of the Bible's universe, and God has made moral standards clear in the hearts of even fallen men.

Therefore, the Holy Spirit's role within the apologetic proclamation is that God's Spirit convicts a lost individual of contradictory, immoral, and wicked behavior that the individual knows is fundamentally wrong because all men are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). The Holy Spirit allows these things to be understood in the non-believer. This is just as Christ has promised. A non-believer sees the need to repent of sin as not based on human effort or will, but on the work of God's Spirit in an apologetics presentation (Romans 9:16).

The Holy Spirit Opens a Person's Eyes

Defending the Christian faith against doubters who are non-believers is not the sole purpose of Christian Apologetics. Unfortunately, apologetics has sometimes been viewed as merely knocking down the unbeliever's arguments against the Christian faith. Yet, when the Holy Spirit opens a person's eyes to the need for a Savior, the Holy Spirit's role in a person's life apologetically has just begun. In other words, the very fact that one can develop a cohesive defense of the Christian worldview and grow in that faith is *because* of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit initially opened a person's eyes to the rationality of the Christian worldview and continues to secure the believer in God's truth.

Apologetically, the Holy Spirit opens the eyes of the unregenerate and

changes a person by His grace, from dead in sin, to living in the newness of life. The Holy Spirit works in apologetics to strengthen Christians, opening their

“Since the Holy Spirit is ultimately responsible for breathing new life into an unbeliever, a rational defense...and faith....never fails.”

eyes to understand more of the truth of the gospel. This act of opening a believer's eyes to the need for more of God's grace is also a work of the Holy Spirit. Because of the Holy Spirit's work, any believer can construct a rational defense of the Christian worldview and present it to others.

Therefore, the Holy Spirit not only opens the eyes of the unregenerate, but also continues to open the eyes of believers to see more of the truth of the Christian position.

The Holy Spirit Puts a Burning in the Heart

In Luke's Gospel, on the road to Emmaus, the risen Jesus starts a conversation with two men after His crucifixion (Luke 24:13-35). The two men are not aware that it is Jesus Christ that they are speaking to. As Jesus talks with the two men, they later recount to each other “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?” (Luke 24:32). Of course, this is after their eyes have been opened to the fact that it is Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit works in the same way. Many who begin to dip their toes in apologetics get more excited as they read more of the rational defense of the Christian faith. Many young and aspiring apologists fall into the rabbit holes of authors and theologians as they begin to uncover the incredible nature of who God is and how the truth of God is evident in so many things. It is the Holy Spirit that causes one to desire to want to know more about the Lord and even about His Word. The Holy Spirit starts and fuels the fire of apologetics inquiry,

placing a burning desire in the life of a believer to learn more about the rational defense of the Christian worldview.

The Holy Spirit Breathes New Life into a Dead Heart

Although the topic of breathing new life into the heart of a dead sinner has been partially covered in previous points, it remains a crucial reality that an apologist must continuously reflect upon and prioritize. As R.C. Sproul notes:

We are dead on arrival spiritually — not just weak, ailing, critically ill, or comatose. There is no spiritual heartbeat, no spiritual breathing, no spiritual brain-wave activity. We are spiritually stillborn, and so we remain — unless God the Holy Spirit makes us alive.

The critical role of the Holy Spirit in apologetics is that it is the Holy Spirit that makes one alive. Since effectiveness in apologetics is not measured in nu-

merical results but in faithfulness, an apologist needs to realize that no matter how persuasive, winsome, coherent, rational, or logical the defense of the gospel is, it is the Holy Spirit who breathes new life into a dead heart, not arguments. Reflecting on the truth that the Holy Spirit breathes new life, and not cogent and potent arguments winsomely

“Speaking light into darkness is a work of the Holy Spirit that glorifies God.”

and persuasively put forward, lets the apologist know he is always successful. God's Spirit and Word raised the dead to new life.

Since the Holy Spirit is ultimately responsible for breathing new life into an unbeliever, a rational defense of the Christian worldview and faith never fails. Speaking light into darkness is a work of the Holy Spirit that glorifies God. Ultimately, the Holy Spirit's role in any apologetic encounter is to bring about

the glory of God in either causing a heart to be transformed to salvation or hardened toward the gospel, bringing about righteous condemnation. The role of the Holy Spirit in apologetics is to save or to condemn, working out God's perfect plan.

The Holy Spirit Gives Understanding

Finally, the role of the Holy Spirit in apologetics is to provide understanding. Scripture clarifies that a person's understanding of God is only a result of God's Spirit working in a person. Not only does that impact the apologist defending the faith, but it also affects the person the apologist has spoken to or is speaking to. If a person hears, understands, and responds to the gospel defense or presentation, the apologist can give credit to God.

“Failure to acknowledge the Spirit of God’s role in defending the faith causes one to think too highly of one’s role in bringing lost individuals to salvation...”

When a person responds in repentance and faith, it is not because the apologist is so great. It is because God's Spirit is so great.

Wherever one falls in the lines of soteriology (doctrine of salvation), all agree that salvation is a work of God by the Spirit of God. Any rational understanding a lost sinner receives in the process of coming to new life is not because of man, but because the Holy Spirit gave understanding. God gave a sinner spiritual insight and knowledge that led to a new life in His divine providence.

Conclusion

The role of the Holy Spirit in apologetics is much like the role of the Holy Spirit in salvation. Still, Christian apologists must work diligently to develop rational

arguments. They must develop as persuasive speakers and writers for God's glory. They must continually advance the Church's understanding of the archaeological, historical, philosophical, and theological realities and seek to defend the Christian worldview. God claims dominion over every facet of creation and society. Apologists must proclaim this because they are called to by God's Word directly. Apologetics is not a task that only a few elite Christians are called to participate in. Apologetics is not a task that is to be isolated to the ivory towers of academia.

While the development of persuasive arguments, understanding of philosophy and theology are incredibly relevant in apologetics and apologetic encounters, and while classical arguments for the existence of God, archaeological and evidential arguments for the God of the Bible are essential, the apologist must never forget the role and power of the Holy Spirit in apologetics.

Failure to acknowledge the Spirit of God's role in defending the faith causes one to think too highly of one's role in bringing lost individuals to salvation; it creates a false understanding of how God functions in His world. The knowledge of the Holy Spirit and His role in applying apologetics is a concept Christians must prayerfully reflect on. Additionally, considering the role of the Holy Spirit in apologetics reminds Christian apologists that success in proclaiming God's Kingdom is not dependent upon them. No, believers have an Advocate, the Holy Spirit, who not only opens the eyes of believers and unbelievers but gives a new heart to repentant sinners; that same Spirit will guard all believers into eternity.

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What is the Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit?

By Dave Jenkins



If anyone has slandered Christ or rejected Him for a season, Jesus says, “Every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men” (12:31a).

It matters not what a man once said about Jesus (Matthew 12:32).

If he repents, God will forgive. On the other hand, “*Blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven*” (Matthew 12:31b).

The unpardonable sin cannot be an ordinary sin, nor can it merely be a repeated sin. When Jesus says, “*Blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven,*” we realize there must be something extraordinary about that sin. The Pharisees had not committed it when they blasphemed Jesus, but they came close enough that Jesus’ warning was in order. When the Pharisees said Jesus cast out demons by

the power of Satan, it was blasphemy — a serious sin (Matthew 12:31–32). Yet Jesus distinguished it from blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which cannot be forgiven.

The distinction between blasphemy against Jesus (forgivable) and blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (unforgivable) rests upon the work of the Holy Spirit. He convicts of sin and testifies that Jesus is the Son of God and Savior. Jesus says someone can reject Jesus, and God will forgive if he repents and believes. The Pharisees did not (as Jesus said on the cross) know what they were doing (Luke 23:34). Sins of ignorance, however severe, are pardonable. Paul blasphemed and persecuted the church, but God had mercy on him because he sinned in ignorance (1 Timothy 1:12–17). Likewise, many Jews who participated in the crucifixion did not understand what they were doing and eventually repented (Luke 23:34; Acts 2; Acts 7:60).

“As reassuring as it is to know that God will remember us in this lifetime, it is infinitely more vital for Him to acknowledge us in the life to come...”

Blasphemy against the Spirit is the sober, clear-minded, deliberate rejection of Jesus, despite full knowledge of His work and in the face of the Spirit’s full testimony of Him. This blasphemer has heard the gospel proclaimed with clarity and power. He has watched Christians live good lives. Yet, he hates Jesus and Christianity and views it as wickedness and deceit. He hears, understands, and despises.

It is not easy to commit this sin. Christians, kept by God’s power, cannot commit it. Unbelievers who fear this sin have not committed it. If they had, they would be smug and satisfied, not fearful. The Pharisees had not yet committed

this sin because they did not know enough. They had not seen the end of Jesus' story—His death and resurrection. Perhaps some of the Pharisees committed this sin later on. But at the time of Matthew 12, Jesus warns them of the danger and bids them repent.

The concept of the unpardonable sin is fearful, yet it contains a seed of hope. It teaches us that every other sin, however terrible, *can be* forgiven. Anyone worried about this sin is far short of it. Indeed, concern about the unpardonable sin may be a token of the Spirit's working in the heart. Those who are guilty of the sin are so settled in their rejection of the faith that it will not alarm them. Whoever we are, whatever we have done, we can still find mercy if we repent and believe, based on the person and work of Jesus.

Confessing Christ

As reassuring as it is to know that God will remember us in this lifetime, it is infinitely more vital for Him to acknowledge us in the life to come (Luke 12:8–9). Jesus puts our relationship with Him into an eternal perspective. He summons us to the tribunal of heaven, where the greatest of all judges holds court with all His angels. To acknowledge Jesus before men is to be open and honest about our total life-commitment to Him as our Savior and our Lord. It is to show that we are Christians by the things that we do and say. It is to work for Christ, play for Christ, and witness for Christ in our daily lives. It is to make a verbal confession of our faith, both inside and outside the Church. To confess Christ is to do all these things regardless of what persecution or opposition we may suffer.

If we do not confess Christ, we deny Him. And if we deny Him, He will deny us. This is only fair, but it is also frightening because Jesus will deny us when it matters most of all: at the final judgment (Luke 12:9). On the Day when

all secrets are revealed before the throne of God, Jesus will not testify that we belong to Him or claim the merits of His death on our behalf. Instead, He will send us to Hell, all because we were too afraid to make our stand for Christ.

This ought to lead to some serious self-examination and serious questions, such as, “Am I confessing Jesus Christ, or denying him?” If you have denied him, you need to offer full repentance for your sin and make a true confession of faith. If you do this, God will forgive you (Luke 12:10). However, Jesus also went on to give this sober warning: “*but the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven*” (Luke 12:10).

To speak against the Son of Man is to speak against Jesus Christ without fully understanding who He is or what He has done. This, however, is not the

“We, too, can trust the Holy Spirit to help us whenever we witness for Christ.”

equivalent the full and final denial that Jesus was talking about in Matthew 12:9. Nevertheless, it is still sin—a sin of weakness that God can and will forgive if one repents of it. An excellent example of such forgiveness is demonstrated in the forgiveness Jesus offered the men who taunted Him while He hung on the cross, saying, “*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*” (Luke 23:34).

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit must be a different and more serious sin. From similar passages in Matthew and Mark, it appears to be the sin of someone who knows that Jesus is the Christ, but attributes His power to Satan instead (Matthew 12:31–32; Mark 3:28–30). It is of the very nature of the case that such a person—hardened by sin—will not be forgiven. This is not because of any deficiency in God’s grace, but because such a person denies the only gospel that can ever save anyone. The blood of Christ is sufficient for any sin-

ner who truly repents—even a sinner who has at some point denied the name of Christ.

The Help of the Spirit

Jesus calls Christians to believe the witness of the Spirit and to rely on His assistance whenever we speak for Christ. When Jesus told His disciples to be unafraid and unashamed, He did not expect them to do this in their own strength, but instead promised that the Spirit would be with them to help them (Luke 12:11–12).

Jesus was preparing His disciples for persecution. In the coming days, they would be dragged before various religious and political authorities—both Jewish and Gentile—and they would be forced to defend their faith. This began to happen only days after Jesus ascended into heaven, when Peter and John were arrested by the temple police and hauled before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:1). Under the threat of such opposition, it would be tempting for them to be afraid—if not of the persecution itself, then of failing to be a good witness for Christ. Jesus told them not to worry, however, because the Holy Spirit would teach them what to say in the hour they were called to give witness about Him.

God fulfilled this promise. Every time the Apostles or disciples appeared in court, they had another opportunity to proclaim the gospel. We see this again and again in the Book of Acts. The Apostles fearlessly preached in the power of the Spirit, and many people were saved through their ministry.

We, too, can trust the Holy Spirit to help us whenever we witness for Christ. As the Scripture says (written by one who had personally experienced those situations) we always need to be ready to give a reason for the hope in us (1 Peter 3:15). But there are some situations for which it is impossible to prepare. When that happens, we can trust the Spirit to help us. We do not need to

know all the Bible verses, have all the answers, or even persuade people to repent and believe the gospel. All we need to do is testify of Christ and pray that the Holy Spirit will use what we say—however inadequate—to do His saving work in people’s lives.

This is where true spiritual courage comes from. It comes from freely confessing our sins, fearing God more than we fear other people, trusting the watchful care of the Father, knowing that Jesus will defend us at the final judgment, and depending on the help of the Holy Spirit.

Who is the Holy Spirit?

By Michael Schultz



In the early 1800s, the Christian community underwent a crucial and valuable identity-check with the advent of the **Unitarians**. As various groups argued for reconfigurations of historic Chris-

tian doctrines, it appears that those questioning or denying the Trinity often began their critiques by undermining the historical position on the person of the Holy Spirit.

For example, in 1787 John Marsom wrote a book entitled, *The Impersonality of the Holy Ghost*, which—while initially unpopular—was republished in subsequent editions as the nontrinitarian sects grew. The Holy Spirit seems to be the first hurdle over which heretics will lunge when they begin departing from the Christian faith. Thus, it is crucial that Christians of every class (laymen or theologians) have a reasonably well-developed *pneumatology* (that is, an understanding of the Holy Spirit). With that in mind, allow a few basic explanations of who the Holy Spirit is.

The Holy Spirit is a Member of the Godhead

In orthodox Christianity, the doctrine of God is Trinitarian. This can be seen in two ways: historically and scripturally. The history is settled. Christians are Trinitarians and have been for at least 1600 years (as evidenced in the Athanasian Creed), and the very word *Trinity* appeared in common use by Christians within 100 years after the life of Jesus. To put it directly, denial of the Trinity is denial of Christianity.

Of more importance, however, is the scriptural support for the doctrine of the trinity. This is clearly expressed given the Trinitarian formula of Christ's Great Commission, "*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*" (Matthew 28:19). One can also recognize the Holy Spirit's place as a member of the Trinity through His activity in the baptism of Jesus. Matthew 3:16-17 records that when Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit of God descended like a dove and rested on Him, and God the Father spoke from Heaven, stating that Jesus was His "beloved Son". Similar trinitarian formulas are found in 2 Corinthians 13:14, 1 Corin-

ans 12:4-6, Ephesians 4:4-6, 1 Peter 1:2, and Jude 1:20-21.

Not only is the Holy Spirit mentioned in the same likeness as the Father and the Son (as shown), but He is also treated as divine in the Scriptures. In Acts 5:3, Peter tells Ananias that Satan has filled his heart *“to lie to the Holy Spirit.”* In the next verse, he elaborates on this crime by saying, *“you have not lied to man but to God.”* The Holy Spirit, then, is identified as God.

The Holy Spirit is a Person

Christians can sometimes fall into the mistaken habit of referring to the Holy Spirit as “an it”. It would seemingly not be unthinkable to hear a Christian say, “The Holy Spirit will move in you, and *it* will cause you to be convicted!” But imagine the discomfort if that same person referred to their pastor as “it”. How much greater should we guard the third person of the Trinity!

God the Holy Spirit is constantly and repeatedly referred to with the masculine personal pronoun “He” rather than “it”. Jesus calls Him by this masculine personal pronoun several times (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13-14). Paul makes a point to refer to Him with a personal pronoun in Romans 8:26, saying, *“the Spirit himself intercedes for us.”* So, He is not an “it”. He is a *person*.

The Holy Spirit Personally Acts

One may wonder, “Why does it matter if we understand the Holy Spirit to be a *person* or a *force* or *power*?” Or the thought may come through the mind that the Holy Spirit is simply the *soul* of God the Father. These ideas are not foreign to Christian history, but they simply do not work with either established Christian doctrine or the Scriptures.

The Holy Spirit is not only a unique person (eliminating any possibility of Him being considered a *force* or *power*), but He is a unique person from God the

Father (eliminating any possibility of Him being considered God's *soul*). This can be recognized through His personal actions. For example, He comforts, teaches, and reminds God's people in their times of need (John 14:26). He can do this because He can not only understand us, but He can understand God (1 Corinthians 2:10-11). This shows that He is a separate person from both the humans with whom He interacts, and God the Father, as He is able to interpret and comprehend both.

He has knowledge of His own (Romans 8:27), and a will of His own (1 Corinthians 12:11), with which He evaluates the wisdom of certain courses of action (Acts 15:28). He interacts with human beings in a personal way (Acts 16:6), even performing miracles at times (Acts 8:39), and speaking at other times (Acts 8:29 and 13:2). None of these actions describe an impersonal *force* or *power*, but a unique person.

The Holy Spirit is Sent by God the Father and God the Son

Throughout the Bible, the Holy Spirit is frequently noted as being sent by God the Father or God the Son. For example, Isaiah 48:16 records "*the Lord God*" sending His Spirit on a particular mission, and in John 16:7, Jesus prepared His disciples for His departure by promising that He would send the Holy Spirit to them.

While historians and theologians can debate what precisely this means for how members of the Trinity relate to one another (as it has been a source of conflict since the *Filioque* Controversy of the 11th century), it is true in any case to say that the Holy Spirit is sent by God the Father and God the Son, and all that He does is according to the will of the Triune God (Romans 8:27).

The Holy Spirit is Our Greatest Helper

With this purpose in mind, it should come as no shock that the Holy Spirit

is our greatest helper. David famously pronounced in Psalm 139:7-8 that we would never find ourselves in a situation wherein the Holy Spirit was not with us. As a member of the Godhead, He is omnipresent. Further, being able to comprehend the thoughts of God (1 Corinthians 2:11), we can trust that He is also omniscient (all-knowing), and we will never engage in anything He is incapable of understanding. He is also said to be immensely powerful, even being accredited with empowering Christ in His incarnation (Luke 4:14).

Because He is all-powerful, all-knowing, and ever-present, we can take great comfort in the fact that the Holy Spirit is said to be our *Paraclete*. (John 14:16; 14:26; 15:26; 16:7) This Greek word is translated several different ways, including: “Advocate”, “Helper”, “Comforter”, and “Counselor”. Each of these are accurate renderings of the word, and all are true of what the Holy Spirit does for God’s people.

When we don’t know how to pray, “*the Spirit helps us in our weakness*” by interceding “*for us with groanings too deep for words*” (Romans 8:26). He advocates for us in unified agreement with God the Son (1 John 2:1). One way in which He serves as our advocate is by helping us to grow closer to God through convicting us of sin (John 16:8), while also empowering us to live at a higher caliber (Galatians 5:25; Ephesians 5:18).

He is even responsible for producing the fruit in God’s people that validates their relationship with Him (Galatians 5:22-23; Matthew 7:16-20). Beyond all of this, the Holy Spirit also brings us into unity with our fellow Christians (Ephesians 4:1-3), and perhaps most consequentially, He inspired the Scripture. (2 Peter 1:20-21)

The Holy Spirit is the Catalyst, Proof, and Seal of Our Salvation

Finally, the Holy Spirit is a prominent figure in the salvation of mankind.

Without Him, no one would be saved because Jesus said that *“unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God”* (John 3:5). In that same

“He is personal, having autonomous prerogative to act, whilst also carrying out perfectly the will of God the Father and Son who send Him.”

conversation, Jesus testified that the Holy Spirit brings spiritual life to whomsoever He pleases, comparing Him to the wind which *“blows where it wishes”* (John 3:8). He brings about salvation through what is Biblically referred to as the *“baptism of the Spirit”* (1 Corinthians 12:13). This, His prerogative, is perfectly in line with His being sent by the Father (Luke 11:13) and Son (Mark 1:8) to accomplish God’s will and may explain why He is referred to as the *“Spirit of grace”* (Hebrews 10:29).

Upon reviving the dead sinner, the Holy Spirit begins living within the Christian and is simultaneously the proof of his/her salvation and the security of his/her salvation. Any person who does not have the Holy Spirit living in him/her does not belong to Jesus Christ (Romans 8:9). This means, by the inverse, that all believers have the Holy Spirit living within them (Acts 2:38). In fact, in Acts 19:2, Paul stumbled upon a group of individuals professing belief in Jesus, and even having been baptized in water. He asked them, *“Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?”* They responded that they had never heard of the Holy Spirit. He went on to preach the gospel to them, baptize them anew, and confirm that they were converted through the presence of the Holy Spirit in them.

Further than simply manifesting our salvation, the Holy Spirit secures it, as He is called the one *“by whom we were sealed for the day of redemption”* (Ephesians 4:30). This statement refers to the royal *“seal”* that would be

placed on possessions of the king to mark them as his own. In this case, it is said that God the Father has “sealed” His people—marking them as His own—by giving them the Holy Spirit to live within them.

Who is the Holy Spirit?

In a real sense, the Holy Spirit is the inter-advent Immanuel. He is “God with us” until the Second Coming of Christ. He is God, the third person of the Trinity, uncreated, immeasurable, eternal. He is Almighty, Lord, Unbegotten, One and not three. He is neither before nor after, greater nor smaller, than the Father or the Son, but coequal with them.

He is personal, having autonomous prerogative to act, whilst also carrying out perfectly the will of God the Father and Son who send Him. He is our greatest Helper in life, and is the catalyst, proof, and seal of our salvation. Let us say without reservation: the Holy Spirit is God.

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit in Pauline Literature

By Joshua Mills

The ministry of the Holy Spirit has often been a neglected subject of study.

Many Christians are left wondering who the Holy Spirit is and what His ministry looks like in the new covenant age. The aim of this article is to briefly consider what the Apostle Paul has to say concerning the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It will be argued that Paul emphasizes a three-fold ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Ho-

ly Spirit has a Christocentric, soteriological and ecclesiological ministry among God's people.ⁱ As Sinclair Ferguson put it, the Apostle Paul shows his audience



that the central role of the Holy Spirit is to reveal Christ and to unite us to him and to all those who participate in his body.ⁱⁱ

The Holy Spirit in Paul's Christology

To begin, Pauline theology shows us that the Spirit of God is a Christological Spirit. When considering the ministry of the Holy Spirit it is important to structure it with that of union with Christ. Sinclair Ferguson writes that "every facet of the application of Christ's work ought to be related to the way in which the Spirit unites us to Christ himself, and viewed as directly issuing from personal fellowship with him, [namely], union with Christ in the Spirit."ⁱⁱⁱ

Throughout his letters, Paul sees his Apostolic ministry as making known to Gentiles this great mystery: "*Christ in you, the hope of glory*" (Colossians 1:27). Thus, union with Christ by the indwelling Spirit is, therefore, a central theme in what Paul called "*my gospel*" (Romans 2:16; 16:25).^{iv}

First, the Spirit has a ministry of uniting us to Christ. When sinners hear the message of Christ crucified and believe that His death solved the problem of the law's curse, they receive the Spirit of God, whom the Prophets promised and are now included among God's eschatologically restored people (Galatians 3:2, 5, 14; 5:5).^v When a sinner believes in the gospel by faith, the Spirit unites them to Christ, and the believer becomes the dwelling place of God's presence (Romans 8:9, 11; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:17-19; 7:10; Ephesians 2:22; 1 Thessalonians 4:8; 2 Timothy 1:14). This statement implies that believers, "since they are the dwelling place of God's eschatologically given Spirit, are the fulfillment of Ezekiel's promise of the restoration of God's temple on a grand scale in the eschatological age."^{vi} Ferguson writes, "so close is this union, through the Spirit, that Christ is in believers and they dwell in him" (John 17:21, 26).^{vii}

Second, once the Spirit has united us to Christ, He then unfolds to us—and in us—the riches of God's grace, which we inherit in Christ.^{viii} It is the Spirit of God who initially reveals the gospel to us through the ministry of the Word

of God (1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 2 Corinthians 3:3; Galatians 3:1-5). Additionally, the Spirit of God continues to reveal the things of God to the people of God. In Ephesians 1:17, the Apostle Paul prayed that *“that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him.”* Therefore, not only does the Spirit lay the foundation to our Christian life, but He continues to play an important role in growing us in the grace and knowledge of God in Christ (Ephesians 1:17; 3:5; 6:17; Colossians 1:8; 1 Timothy 4:1; 1 Peter 3:18).

The Holy Spirit in Paul’s Soteriology

Next, Pauline theology shows us that the Spirit of God is a soteriological Spirit. This is shown in several different ways. First, the Spirit of God does a renewing work, both distinctively and progressively, in the life of a sinner. In 1 Corinthians 6:11 and 2 Thessalonians 2:13, Paul shows us that the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit is definitive, or better said, positional, indicating the work of the Spirit in setting a person apart at conversion.^{ix} The believer’s union to Christ is “inaugurated by the renewing work of the Spirit in which he begins the transformation into the image of Christ which will be completed at the eschaton.”^x The sovereign, monergistic, activity of the Spirit fulfills the promise that God would give His people new hearts and spirits through the indwelling of His Spirit, resulting in a new life (Ezekiel 36:24-27; Romans 2:29; 15:16; Titus 3:5).

The Spirit of God also progressively transforms the believer from one degree of glory to another (2 Corinthians 3:18; Galatians 3:3). The sign of genuine saving faith is the presence of God’s Spirit within, and God’s Spirit bears in the life of the believer ethical fruit that conforms to the law of Christ (Romans 5:5; 14:17, 15:30; 2 Corinthians 6:6-7; Galatians 5:22-23; 6:8; 1 Thessalonians 1:6).^{xi} The Spirit of God leads and helps believers walk along an ethical path (Galatians 5:16, 18, 25).

Paul then shows us that the New Covenant—namely, the age of the Spir-

it—is a better and more glorious covenant (Romans 7:6; 8:2; 8:4-6, 10; 2 Corinthians 3:6; 3:8; 17; Galatians 5:16-18, 25). The law of Moses kills insofar as it pronounces judgment upon those who break the law. However, the Spirit gives life, since under the New Covenant sins are forgiven and remembered no more, and the people of God are enabled by the Spirit of God to live for God.^{xii} Those in the New Covenant serve in a new and better way “by virtue of the Holy Spirit, and as a result, those who are indwelt by the Spirit are given the freedom to obey” and do what pleases God.^{xiii} However, the Spirit can be grieved by sinful conduct (Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:19).

The Spirit is also identified as a seal, or guarantee, and as the Spirit of adoption. First, one of the many spiritual blessings, which are ours in Christ, is having the Holy Spirit as our seal. In several texts, Paul mentions that the Spirit is our seal for our future redemption (2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30). A seal is to be understood as that which secures and authenticates an object with a view to some future occasion.^{xiv} In this case, the seal of the Spirit acts as a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance. It is a down-payment for our future in glory.

Therefore, the Spirit serves as an authenticating mark that God Himself has included them (primarily the Gentiles) among His people.^{xv} Additionally, Paul mentions the Spirit of adoption, which brings us into fellowship with God (Romans 8:14, 15-16, 23; 26-27; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Galatians 4:6, 29; Ephesians 2:18; 6:18; Philippians 3:3). Through the work of the Spirit, we enter into the sense of sonship which Jesus experienced with the Father in the context of our humanity.^{xvi} Therefore, by the Spirit we are given a new status and a new family: we are children of God (Romans 8:29).

The Holy Spirit in Paul’s Ecclesiology

Finally, Pauline theology show us that the Spirit of God is ecclesiological in nature. This is seen in two respects: first, the Spirit of God empowers believ-

ers to live in a way that pleases God—namely, “they walk by the Spirit, are led by the Spirit, march in step with the Spirit, and sow to the Spirit.”^{xvii} The Spirit

“After our Lord’s resurrection, He reminded His people about the promised Spirit, who will be poured out on the day of Pentecost...”

empowers believers in Christian service (Ephesians 3:16; 5:18), in prayer and communion with God (Romans 8:26-27; Ephesians 2:18; 6:18; Philippians 1:19; 1 Timothy 3:16), and in overcoming spiritual opposition to the preaching of the gospel (Romans 15:19; 1 Corinthians 2:4; 12:3; 14:2; Ephesians 6:17; 1 Thessalonians 1:5).

Paul shows us that the Spirit of God unifies the body of Christ and distributes gifts among its members (1 Corinthians 12:4-14; 12:13; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Philippians 2:1; Ephesians 4:3-5). The new life by the Spirit is summed up in the expression “fellowship of the Spirit”, which denotes a sharing with each other in a unity enabled by the Spirit and joint participation in the Spirit.^{xviii} In other words, the Spirit does not merely call individuals to Himself but to an entire assembly.

In 1 Corinthians 12:13, Paul’s point is that “the body is one because all its members share in the one Spirit whom they have received simultaneously with their incorporation into Christ’s body...All Christians are thus baptized into one body by Christ; the Spirit is the medium of that baptism.”^{xix}

Also, Paul stresses that the unity of the body of Christ is strengthened by the gifts that the Spirit distributes. Ferguson notes that “central to the exercise of any gift of the Spirit is the ministry of the word given to God’s people.”^{xx} Though there is no comprehensive list of gifts that the Spirit distributes, it is clear that the ministry of the Word is central to the use of all other gifts (Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:8-11, 28; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 4:11). Through the min-

istry of the Word, the Church is built up in Christ (Ephesians 4:7-16). Therefore, Paul shows us that the ministry of the ecclesiological Spirit strengthens the Church to full maturity in Christ.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we can thank God for the ministry of the Holy Spirit among His people. After our Lord's resurrection, He reminded His people about the promised Spirit, who will be poured out on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Jesus said in Luke 24:49: "*And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.*" In this article, we have sought to understand more of the ministry of the Holy Spirit among the people of God. In Pauline literature, the Apostle reminds us that Holy Spirit ministers in a Christocentric, soteriological, and ecclesiological manner.^{xxi}

Come, Holy Comforter,
Thy sacred witness bear
In this glad hour.
Thou Who almighty art,
Now rule in every heart,
And ne'er from us depart,
Spirit of Power!^{xxii}

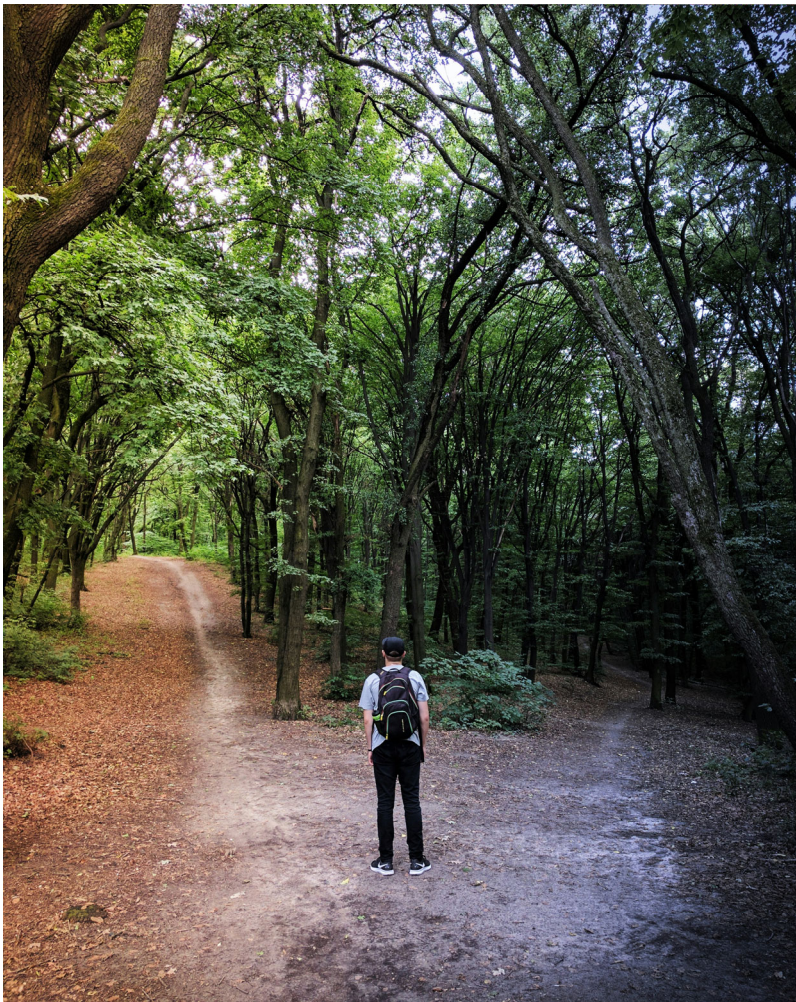
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- xxii. "Come, Thou Almighty King", by Charles Wesley.

The Holy Spirit and Making Decisions

By Justin Huffman



As the title of this issue of *Theology for Life Magazine* reminds us, it is crucial for Christians to remember that the Holy Spirit is a *who*, not a *what*. He is the third *person* of the triune God who has revealed Himself to us in Scripture. So, when we talk about the Holy Spirit helping us make decisions, we are speaking of a Counselor who comes along side us, not an impersonal force that moves us or a fate that just “happens” to us.

In John 14, Jesus speaks of His own fast-approaching departure, but promises that He will send His Helper (also translated *Counselor*, *Com-*

forter, and *Advocate*) who is the Spirit (John 16-17). Some aspects of the Spirit's ministry were perhaps constrained to the Apostles themselves, as we see in verses 25-26, teaching them all things and bringing to memory Jesus' words to them after His ascension. Yet, other aspects of the Spirit's work are universal to all of God's people. This is why Jesus would speak of giving the Spirit "*forever*" (16), and the fact that "*he dwells with you and will be in you*" (17).

But how does this Helper help us? How does this Counselor counsel us? Can we count on the Holy Spirit to assist us in making decisions, small or great, in our present circumstances and even future planning? This is not only an issue worth considering, but an issue that needs settling if we are to confidently move through the many-channeled possibilities of daily life.

The Spirit is Promised, and He Promises to Help

As mentioned already, Jesus promises to send His Spirit and that His Spirit will be our helper and counselor. Elsewhere in Scripture we learn that part of the Spirit's help comes in the form of helping us pray even though we don't always even know what to ask or how to put our prayers into words (Romans 8:26). The Spirit also teaches us and matures us in such a way as to bring about His gracious "*fruits*" in our hearts and in our lives: "*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control*" (Galatians 5:22).

This kind of help is certainly part of how the Spirit assists us in making decisions. Every unction to pray, every choice to be kind to others or temperate in the face of temptation—these are necessary elements of making godly decisions on a consistent basis. This daily forming of holy habits should not be underestimated or overlooked, because no amount of wisdom for big or public decisions will help if our daily, private life is not displaying the fruits of the Spirit.

Yet it is still true that every Christian, no matter how spiritually mature they may be, will frequently face crossroads that require more wisdom or insight than they personally possess. After all, none of us can see the future, or

calculate every possible risk, or even know ourselves perfectly. Thankfully, we know Someone who does.

While Every Decision is Different, Some Things are the Same

While every choice, whether large or small, is going to have its own distinct set of challenges, there are three basic principles that we should apply in every life situation. This does not mean discerning God's will always be easy, but God does promise to lead us, in His own good time and way, when we apply these principles faithfully! Ultimately, then, in order to know God's will in any given situation, we must approach every decision:

1) Biblically

God's Word is sufficient to equip us for righteous living (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The Spirit will never lead contrary to what He has already revealed in His Word. While the Bible does not answer every question for us, it does reveal invariable principles and priorities that should govern every decision. This means we cannot confidently know God's will if we do not know His Word. There is no shortcut here, no easy way around the necessary groundwork of seeking to know God through His revealed, inerrant, sufficient Word.

2) Prayerfully

God has promised to answer prayers (Matthew 7:7-11; James 1:5; Psalm 3:5-7). He has not promised to answer on our timetable, or even in ways that we necessarily expect. But He does answer in ways we can understand and follow (Psalm 27:11). Again, there is no shortcut for intimate, intense time with God, praying for the Spirit's help and waiting patiently on His timing and direction.

3) Spiritually

Spiritual faith is necessary for discerning God's will (Psalm 25:8-10). For the Spirit to be our helper and counselor, we have to be willing to submit totally

to His authority in our lives. An unbeliever can read the Bible and pray, but God does not lead unbelievers in His good ways. God helps those who seek Him first (Jeremiah 29:13; Matthew 6:33). Some of the means God often uses, by His Spirit, to guide His people are:

- Godly, wise counselors (Proverbs 24:6; 1:7).
- Providential limitations or opportunities, closing or opening doors (1 Corinthians 16:9).
- A good desire in your own heart (1 Timothy 3:1).
- Giftedness/aptitudes for certain efforts (1 Corinthians 12).
- Hard work towards a good goal (Proverbs 18:22; 31:10-31; Luke 14:28-30).
- Peace of mind/heart (Psalm 25:12-13a).

In the end, there is no formula for spiritual decision making. The only necessary ingredient is the Spirit Himself, but this fact necessarily means we will rarely be allowed to do things our own way or on our own timetable. This is not only because God is infinitely wiser than we are; it is also because part of what God is working in us, by His Spirit, is not only good decision making but genuine dependence on Him.

Just as with ancient Israel, God may just give us enough manna for each day, enough wisdom for the road right at our feet, enough strength to fulfill today's tasks. And that is part of the Spirit's helping and counseling as well, because it is training our hearts, not only make wise decisions, but to need Him above all else.

The Christian and the Role of the Holy Spirit

By Dave Jenkins

The Gospels have little to say when considering the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

In the Fourth Gospel, the Evangelist spends three chapters (John 14-16) teaching on the Holy Spirit's role in the life of the believer. The Gospel of John may be criticized on its structure and genre,

but it is beyond dispute that John demonstrates a deep understanding of the Old Testament. Today, I will cover three sections the work of the Holy Spirit, the person of the Holy Spirit, and receiving of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit's role in the life of the believer to convict of sin, glorify the person of Jesus, and transform believers into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ.



The Work of the Holy Spirit

John 1:33: The Spirit Descending as a Dove

The Holy Spirit descending on Jesus as a dove is a sign of His divine anointing. “In the Synoptic Gospels, the descent of the Spirit as a dove was something Jesus Himself witnessed (Matthew 3:16), a symbol in tandem with the voice from heaven....Here in the Fourth Gospel, however, the dove assumes a different role: it identifies the Coming One to John the Baptist.”¹ John the Baptist had been told by God Himself who the Promised Messiah would be: *“He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit”* (v.33).

The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament came upon people to enable them to accomplish God-given tasks. An example of this is when Isaiah predicted that the Messiah would be full of the Spirit at all times (Isaiah 11:2; 61:1; Luke 4:18). Christians reading Isaiah 11:1 “saw in Jesus the fulfillment of God’s promises to pour out his spirit on the coming Davidic king, on the Servant of the Lord (Is.

“This is why Nicodemus shouldn’t have been surprised when Jesus told him about the new birth.”

42:1) and on the prophet-figure”² who announces, *“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor”* (Isaiah 61:1). “The visible descent of the Spirit on Jesus served as the God-given sign by which the Baptist would know that this was the long-awaited Coming One...The Spirit not only descends on Jesus, but remains on him...That Jesus would baptize his people in the Holy Spirit is therefore simultaneously an attestation of who he is, and an announcement that the promised age is dawning...For the Evangelist, then, the aspect of

Jesus' baptism that suited his purpose in writing was its role in bringing the Baptist to recognize who Jesus was, and therefore to hear witness specifically to him, and no longer to an unidentified 'Coming One.'"³

The Spirit as the Giver of Life (John 3:6; 6:33)

John 3:6 and 6:33 view the Holy Spirit as the giver of eternal life. John 3:6 states, *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."* John 6:33 says, *"For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."* John 3:36 and 6:33 teach that it is the Holy Spirit's work to give new life. Merrill Tenney explains, "The new life of one born of the Spirit is unexplainable by ordinary reasoning, and the outcome is unpredictable."⁴

"The flesh does not mean the same thing as when Paul assigns it, 'sinful nature'⁵ ...As in, John 1:14, 'flesh' refers to human nature, the point is that natural, human birth produces people who belong to the earthly family of humankind, but not to the children of God...It is the Holy Spirit who produces new nature, a spirit-nature where 'spirit' is related to the sphere of God and things divine. In order for those born of flesh to experience the new birth that makes them children of God, the eternal Word had to become flesh. Nicodemus should have understood the need for a God-given new birth, and God's promise that He would give his people a new heart, a new nature, clean lives and a full measure of the spirit on the last day."⁶ This is why Nicodemus shouldn't have been surprised when Jesus told him about the new birth.

"The bread of God is synonymous with the 'bread of heaven...The bread of God reminds God's people that this Bread is the revealer, the One who has narrated God to His people (1:18), the One who alone can tell them heavenly things (3:11-13), the One whose words, because He is the obedient Son, are nothing less than the words of God."⁷

The Spirit Sovereignly Acts (John 3:8)

The sovereign character of regeneration is explained by an illustration tak-

en from the action of wind in John 3:8. No one can direct the wind because it acts with complete independence. "The word breath or wind within 'the spirit of man is that immaterial principle of life within him.'"⁸ "The 'Greek word *Pneuma* and *Ruach* both mean spirit, wind, or breath.'"⁹ "Nicodemus was brought up with 'the belief that a person could and should save himself by perfect obedience to the Law of Moses and to a host of man-made, thoroughly analyzable, human regulations.'"¹⁰

The Spirit as Living Water (John 4:10)

"Jesus arouses the curiosity of the woman in order that her respect for him may increase, and the work of rescuing this soul from the fetters of sin and evil may make further progress."¹¹ While Jesus does not directly answer the woman's question, He doesn't ignore it either, but shows her that the question she asked is based on an erroneous presumption. The woman proceeds from the assumption: "*You— a Jew— are needy and helpless—I, a Samaritan woman, am self-sufficient and therefore able to supply your need. Jesus by His answer shows her that she is the one who needs the Water that only He can supply.*"¹²

Jesus' words about "living water" involve double meaning, as the phrase refers to fresh spring water. John 7:38-39 identifies this "living water" as the Holy Spirit dwelling within a believer (Jeremiah 2:13; Ezekiel 47:1-6; Zechariah 14:8). "When Jesus speaks about living water He means spring-water which bubbles up by itself, in distinction from rain water, which must be collected in a cistern or reservoir...The metaphor speaks of God and his grace, knowledge of God, life, the transforming power of the Holy Spirit; in Isaiah 1:16-18; Ezekiel 36:25-27 water promises cleansing."¹³

"In John's Gospel there are passages where Jesus is the living water as he is the bread from heaven (6:35), and other passages where he gives the living water to believers. In this chapter, the water is the satisfying eternal life mediated by the Spirit that only Jesus, the Messiah and Savior of the world can pro-

vide.”¹⁴

Worshipping in Spirit and in Truth (John 4:23-4:24)

“The verb *will worship* in the Fourth gospel never means will respect.”¹⁵ Worship worthy of the name of Jesus operates from a clear and definite knowledge of God, derived from the revelation of His Word. “Worshipping the Lord in spirit and truth means rendering homage to God so that the entire heart enters into the act, and doing this in full harmony with the truth of God as revealed in His Word. Such worship will not only be spiritual instead of physical, but it will be directed to the true God as set forth in Scripture and as displayed in the work of redemption.”¹⁶

Some think that doctrinal soundness is of little importance, while some think that a humble, spiritual attitude means little. Genuine worshipers worship in spirit and truth. For such are the very people whom the Father is seeking as His worshipers, because “the Father keeps on intensely yearning for His elect in order to make them

“The necessity for distinctly spiritual worship is rooted in the very being of God: God is Spirit.”

worshipers.”¹⁷ The seeking of the Father is always saving (Luke 19:10), because it is God who takes the initiative in the work of salvation, never man (3:16; 6:37, 39, 44, 65; 15:16).

The necessity for distinctly spiritual worship is rooted in the very being of God: God is Spirit. “The predicate, Spirit, is the first word of the sentence, and is not preceded by the article. The predicated is placed first for the sake of emphasis: completely spiritual in his essence is God...God is not a stone-deity or tree-deity, neither is he a mountain. God is an independent, incorporeal, personal

Being.”¹⁸ Hence, those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

Jesus places His own “*must*” over and against that of the woman (4:24 with 4:20), which means genuine worshipers must worship Him in spirit and truth. “The expression the true worshiper does not make a distinction between worshippers after the ministry of Jesus (the true worshipers and those before the ministry of Jesus (presumably the false worshippers)).”¹⁹

The Spirit of Truth Comes, Testifying of Christ (John 15:26)

The Helper in John 15:26 is the Holy Spirit. “*Whom I will send*” indicates that the Holy Spirit will come in new power into the world in obedience to God the Son. “*But who proceeds from the Father*” indicates that the Holy Spirit will also come in obedience to the directions of God the Father. Both the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit into the world in a new fullness at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-33). “*He will bear witness about me*”

reminds believers that when they bear witness about Christ, the Holy Spirit is working silently and invisibly through their words.

Jesus has been speaking about the hatred which the disciples will have to endure from the world, which hates the Father and the Son. Hence, it is not surprising that in this connection, He again

comforts His disciples by reminding them of His previous promise (14:16-17, 26) with respect to the coming of the Spirit, the Helper. Jesus Himself will send this Helper. He will be sent from the Father. Essentially, though with difference in emphasis, this is the same as saying: “*I will request the Father, and he will give you another Helper*” (14:16) ... “*the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send*

“The Holy Spirit in John 14:17 is called the Spirit of Truth.”

in my name" (14:26).

"Here in 15:26 the emphasis is on the activity of the Son in the sending of the Spirit, and on the fact that this Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father... The sending of the Spirit, was a matter of the future as Pentecost had not yet arrived. Hence, the future tense is used: "I will send...The procession was taking place at the very moment when Jesus was speaking; hence, the present tense is used.""²⁰

The Holy Spirit in John 14:17 is called the Spirit of Truth. "The Holy Spirit testifies against the world (16:8-9) and to mankind's need. That Spirit will testify (1:7-8). In the midst of the wicked world he will testify against the world (16:8-9). In the midst of the church he will comfort the Church."²¹ "Whenever a servant of God bears witness against the world, this is witness is the work of the Spirit. Whenever a simple believer, by word and example, draws others to Christ, this too is the work of the Spirit. That Spirit always testifies in connection, with the word, the Word of Christ (14:16; 16:14-15)."²² The world is openly hostile to Christ and will not receive him (14:17).

From among those who are hostile to the truth about Jesus, some will be transferred from the Kingdom of Darkness to the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. One example of this is the fierce persecutor– Saul of Tarsus. The Spirit changed him into a zealous missionary for Christ. The Holy Spirit glorifies Himself through the salvation of persecutors like Saul and many others, who come to see the truth and beauty of Jesus Christ.

The Spirit as the Advantageous Helper (John 16:7-14)

Jesus' "going away" in John 16:7 is important because while He was on earth, He could only be in one place at a time, but when He died and rose again, the Holy Spirit would carry on His ministry over the entire world at all times. In addition, in God's sovereign plan for the unfolding of history, the Holy Spirit would not come in new covenant power and fullness until Jesus returned to

Heaven (7:39; 14:16-17; 15:26). "The Helper" refers back to the anticipation of the pouring out of the Spirit and the inauguration of the Kingdom spoken of in Old Testament prophetic literature. Dr. Köstenberger suggests that the term "helping presence" more accurately captures the term *paraklétos*, a reference to the Holy Spirit as helper in the Gospel of John.²³

"He will convict the world" in John 16:8 gives hope that many who are in "the world" (and currently opposed to Jesus) will not be part of "the world" forever but will repent of their sins and believe in Christ. "The world "refuses to believe in Him.""²⁴

"The Spirit convicts the world of its sinful condition, that is, the fact that it stands guilty before God."²⁵ Through the work of witnessing, which will be carried on by the apostles and their followers (15:27), the Holy Spirit will not only lay bare the world's sin, but in the case of some will awaken a consciousness of guilt, which leads to true repentance (1 John 3:8).

"From Acts 2:22-41; 7:51-57; 9:1-6; 1 Cor. 14:24; 2 Cor. 2:15-16; Titus 1:13 one learns that in some cases the result will be conversion; in others, hardening and everlasting punishment."²⁶ Though the world in general continues to persecute the Church (7:51), there will be millions of people in the course of history who are awakened to their sin and guilt. As a result of the operation of God's sovereign grace, men from every tribe and nation will accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

When the Holy Spirit, through the preaching of the Gospel convicts men of their sin, a considerable number of them will cry out, "*Brethren, what shall we do?*" (Acts 2:37). They will feel that the essence of their sin (the one great sin which embraces all others for those who have never heard the Gospel) is this: that they have not accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior but have rejected him.

"*Because I go to the Father*" in John 16:10 means that Jesus will no longer be in the world to teach about true righteousness, and so the Holy Spirit will come

to carry on that function, through illumination (v.13) and through the words of believers who bear witness to the Gospel. “Because the ruler of this world is judged” can also be “has judged”, because the perfect tense verb *kerkritai* (Greek) has the sense of “has been judged and continues in the state resulting from that judgment.”

“John...makes it clear that the Helper spoken of...is the Spirit of Truth.”

“The Spirit of Truth” in John 16:13 means that the “Holy Spirit leads into the whole body of redemptive revelation.”²⁷ Since only God knows the future, “the things to come” highlights the full deity of the Holy Spirit.

The point of John 16:14-15 is that “the Holy Spirit will glorify the Son.”²⁸ The Holy Spirit will “take that which is Christ’s—the very substance of his teaching regarding the purpose of redemption, manner of salvation, etc.—and will enlarge on it. Whatever Christ has done, is doing, will do (for the Church) is the theme of the Holy Spirit’s teaching.”²⁹

The Person of the Holy Spirit: An Everlasting Comforter (John 14:16)

“The person of the Holy Spirit refers to the attributes of emotions, will, volition, intelligence, sensibility, and personality, which relate to humanity.”³⁰ John 14:17 makes it clear that the Helper spoken of in John 14:16 is the Spirit of Truth. “The Holy Spirit is not merely a power but a person, just like the Father and the son. He is another Helper, not a different Helper.”³¹

“The word “another” indicates one like myself, who will take my place, do my work. Hence, if Jesus is a person, the Holy Spirit must be a person.”³²

“Personal attributes are everywhere ascribed to him (14:26; 15:26; Acts 15:28). His relation to the Father and the Son is described as of such a character that if these are persons, he too must be a person (Matt. 28:19; 1 Cor. 12:4-6).”³³

“If Jesus is divine, the Spirit, too, must be divine. Divine attributes are ascribed to the Holy Spirit: such as, eternity, omnipresence, omnipotence, omniscience (1 Cor. 2:10; 12:4-6) and divine works are predicated of him (Matt. 12:18; Luke 4:18). Matthew 28:19 and 2 Corinthians 13:14 make it clear that the three persons are completely equal. One and the same divine essence pervades all.”³⁴

“The Holy Spirit is given by the Father, in answer to the request of the Son.”³⁵ The Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son. “The Father gives Him; the Son sends Him (15:26). He is the Spirit of the Father; is also the Spirit of Christ (Matt. 10:20; Rom. 8:8).”³⁶ “The Holy Spirit is the person in whom the Father and the Son meet one another. Moreover, here as elsewhere the economical trinity rests upon the ontological: the Spirit’s outpouring on the day of Pentecost, to which the present passage refers, rests upon his eternal procession. Both of these are the works of the Father and the Son.”³⁷

The Spirit, in John 14:16, is called another *Paraclete* “a term meaning to be called to the side in order to help...The Father and the Son call the Spirit to the side of the disciples in order to comfort, admonish, teach and guide them; in other words, in order that in any given condition the *Paraclete* may furnish whatever help is necessary.”³⁸ Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to not only comfort, teach and guide believers into all the truth, but to send them out on His mission of proclaiming the Gospel to further the kingdom of God. “Not only are Jesus and his disciples ‘sent’ in this Gospel, but so also is the Spirit ‘sent.’ The Spirit comes to represent and carry on Jesus’ work.”³⁹

The Spirit of Truth: Indwelling the Elect (John 14:17)

Jesus taught His followers that the world cannot receive Him because they “cannot see or know him” (John 14:17). The world “cannot receive” the truth about

Jesus because it follows Satan's lies (8:44-45; 14:30). The world cannot "see him nor know him" because it fails to acknowledge the Spirit (Matthew 12:22-37; Acts 2:12-17). "The Holy Spirit guides his people into the truth which is embodied in Christ and his redemption."⁴⁰

The words "You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you" are intimate and relational. According to Augustine, Christ dwelt physically with His disciples through the Holy Spirit, but also in an invisible way, as he explains commenting on John 14:17 that, "Nor can we have knowledge of Him unless He be in us."⁴¹ Jesus knows the elect, those who are His, because He has opened their eyes to the truth about who He is, what He has done in His life, death, resurrection, and ascension, and now indwells them with the Holy Spirit granting them an everlasting intimate relationship with God, through Jesus Christ.

The Teacher and Reminder of Christ (John 14:26)

"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 that I have said to you" (John 14:26). "A comparison between John 14:26 'whom the Father will send in my name' and 15:26, 'whom I will send to you from the Father' makes it clear that the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2) is ascribed to both the Father and the Son."⁴²

The promise here in this first contains two elements: everything, or all things, and being reminding of everything. First, "The Spirit will teach you everything that is necessary (not only for your salvation, but here specifically) for the work of witnessing (Matt. 10:10; 1 John 2:27)."⁴³ Second, "the Spirit will remind you of everything that I have myself said to you. By means of both of these Jesus Christ is fulfilling his prophetic office, first on earth, then from heaven."⁴⁴ "The two everythings should be viewed as concentric circles, for also by means of recalling the old ("everything that I myself said to you"), the Spirit would be teaching the new."⁴⁵

“It must borne in mind that between the time when Jesus uttered these words and the moment when the Holy Spirit was poured out there occurred the following significant events: Christ’s crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and coronation.”⁴⁶ The Holy Spirit teaches believers the truth about Jesus, helping drill into them a deeper understanding of what they have received in the Word of God.

The Receiving of the Holy Spirit: The Spirit is Received (John 20:19-23)

Some people take the doors being locked in John 20:19 to imply that Jesus miraculously passed through the door or the walls of the room, even though the text does not explicitly say this. It is better to see this passage as teaching that “Jesus literally came and stood before in their midst.”⁴⁷

John 20:21-22 contains the Johannine “Great Commission”, which serves as the culmination of the entire Gospel’s presentation of Jesus as the One sent from the Father (3:17). The Sent One (Jesus has now become the Sender, com-

“Scholars of John have long noted that John is an artist, weaving his story with increasing intensity and passion to get his readers to understand who Jesus is...”

missioning His followers to serve as His messengers and representatives). All three persons of the Godhead are involved in this commissioning: as the Father sent Jesus, so Jesus sends His disciples (20:21), equipping them with the Holy Spirit (v.22). When Jesus “*breathed on them*” and said, “*Receive the Holy Spirit*”, it is best understood as a foretaste of what would happen

when the Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost (Acts 2). This does not mean that the Holy Spirit had no presence in the disciples’ lives prior to this point (John

7:39; 14:16-17).

Conclusion

The work and person of the Holy Spirit in John's Gospel is grounded in the Old Testament. The Holy Spirit is the One who convicts of sin, glorifies the person of Jesus, and transforms believers into His image. The Holy Spirit convicts people of their sins and points them towards Jesus in order that they may with confidence "*draw near to the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace in time of need*" (Hebrews 4:16).

This article examined the person and work of the Holy Spirit; how one receives the Holy Spirit; how the Holy Spirit acts sovereignly to give life, indwells, and teaches the elect in order to deepen their understanding of the work of Jesus, and then sends them out to testify about the glory of Christ. John has intentionally demonstrated in his Gospel a view of the Holy Spirit that is relational, personal, and intimate—showing One who longs to breathe new life into those who come to Jesus, sanctifying them in the Word.

For further study of the Holy Spirit, one should consider studying the relationship of John's view of the Holy Spirit with that of the Book of Acts, and his understanding and use of the Old Testament in his Gospel. Scholars of John have long noted that John is an artist, weaving his story with increasing intensity and passion to get his readers to understand who Jesus is, what He has done, and what He now demands. John's Gospel is a never-ending oasis that beckons Christians to study it in order to help them to grow in the truth, beauty, and glory of Jesus. God's people, through the work and power of the Holy Spirit, are enabled to know and make known the supremacy of Jesus.

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Recommended Reading on the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit

In this issue of *Theology for Life Magazine*, we've been considering the person and work of the Holy Spirit. We understand that we haven't covered everything on this topic, but it is our prayer that readers of this issue will grow in their understanding of it so they can stand fast on the Word of God.

If you've found this issue helpful and would like to study this subject further, please check out the following reading list. These books are at the top of their genre in both excellence and readability.

- *The Mystery of the Holy Spirit* by R.C. Sproul
- *The Holy Spirit* by John Owen
- *On the Holy Spirit* by Basil the Great
- *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* by George Smeaton
- *The Work of the Holy Spirit* by Abraham Kuyper
- *He Who Gives Life* by Graham Cole
- *Who is the Holy Spirit?* By R.C. Sproul
- *The Holy Spirit: Contours of Christian Theology* by Sinclair Ferguson
- *The Holy Spirit* by Robert Letham
- *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* by B.B. Warfield

I hope you'll find these resources helpful as I have.

In Christ Alone,

Dave Jenkins

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