



THE HOLY SPIRIT

The neglected Person of the Godhead



JUNE 7TH, 2016

MIKE GLOVER

The Holy Spirit

Introduction

Why study this subject? The simple answer is because many Christians do not know a great deal about the Holy Spirit. **Why is this the case? Why is there so much ignorance and confusion about the subject?** Because for centuries, it was a neglected subject.

Augustine died AD 430 wrote that there had not been ‘a discussion of the subject, full enough and careful enough, to make it possible to obtain understanding of the Holy Spirit's proper individuality’. 1450 years later; the German theologian Albrecht Ritschl asked the question, **what is meant by the Holy Spirit?**

He then went on to say that ‘the subject has been so neglected by theologians that he, could not undertake the work that would be needed to answer the question, Neglect of the subject has had the unfortunate consequence that some theologians ‘abstain from using the idea altogether.’

Coming closer to our own time, DR. Glover, 1925 ‘Paul of Tarsus’, claimed that, ‘No original work (he meant no real study) has been done on ‘the holy spirit’ since the days of the apostles.’

When was interest in the subject revived? In 1857 by William Arthur. In his book ‘The Tongue of Fire’. This may be considered as the beginning of the so-called ‘Pentecostal Movement’ religious people ‘rediscovered’ the Holy Spirit’s existence! They began to use the many expressions found in the New Testament, ‘the gift’, ‘the gifts’, and ‘the baptism’. ‘The indwelling’, ‘the filling’, ‘the guidance’, ‘the leading of the Spirit’.

The so-call ‘charismatic movements’ sprang up. ‘Four Square Gospel’, ‘Holiness’, ‘Pentecostal’. And other religious bodies, all claiming to be ‘Led by the Spirit’, even though they disagreed among themselves! There is absolutely nothing wrong with the words and phrases they used because they are taken out of the New Testament, but the way in which they applied them was very wrong indeed! They used them to support ideas and doctrine about the Holy Spirit, which are no-where found in the Scriptures.

And, to complicate matters even further, these people spoke about the Holy Spirit in such a superior kind of way about the ‘miraculous gifts’ they claimed to possess, that ordinary Christians were often made to feel inferior. The so-called ‘Charismatic movement’, even invaded certain sections of the churches that are usually regarded as very ‘orthodox’, attracting emotional men and women, who found the older churches too quiet and sober in comparison with the ‘New Pentecostal’ bodies.

The Church of England, Church of Scotland, Baptist, Methodist Churches, etc., were affected by this movement. There is no doubt at all that these so-call ‘Spirit-led people’ believed that they were superior to ordinary church-members!

We need to return to the Word of God, to discover what it reveals about the Holy Spirit. We should always remember that, if everything we now know about the Holy Spirit, could be blotted out of our minds, and if our Bible was taken from us, we wouldn’t even know that the Holy Spirit exists! This is because all we can know with certainty about the Holy Spirit is found in this book.

In fact, it is true to say that the Bible is the Holy Spirit’s own revelation of Himself. It is His autobiography! And if we really want to get to know the Holy Spirit, there is no better and no other way to do so, than by reading this book.

Another reason why many people know so little about the Holy Spirit. If you look up the words Holy Spirit in your dictionary, you will find that it will tell you that ‘The Holy Spirit is the third Person in the Trinity’. And that is where the Holy Spirit ranks, in the thinking of a great many people. **Number three!**

First, there is God, The Father, then there is Christ, or the Word of God, **Number Two!** And then there is the Holy Spirit, The Spirit of God, **and Number Three**. And the implication is that the Holy Spirit is somehow inferior in rank to the other members of the Godhead.

There is also yet another reason why this is a neglected subject. The Holy Spirit doesn’t have a ‘Personal Name’, to which we can relate.

We have no real difficulty in relating to **God**, whom we know as a **Father**, and whom we are taught to approach in prayer, as children to a Father. Sometimes we even think about Him in human terms! We are taught to believe in a God who loves us and who sent His Son to die for us!

And, as for the **Son**, who became Man and lived on earth and experienced the kind of trials that you and I experience, who could be hungry, who wept, and who suffered, it is easy to relate to Him! He is the one of whom it was said, '**You shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins**'. **Matthew 1:21**.

But the Holy Spirit has no '**personal name**'! In fact, in a great many religious books, hymns and prayers used in the so-called '**Christian world**', we find the expression '**Holy Ghost**' being used of Him, even in these days.

But what sort of picture does this conjure up? Holy Ghost? When we think about a ghost what are we thinking about? Some sort of apparition that floats in the air and is able to pass through brick walls? Some sort of supernatural entity that haunts old houses? Isn't that what people think about when the word '**ghost**' is mentioned?

That is certainly what the word means today and it is the impression that the older versions of the Bible create. For example, the **A.V.** speaks about the '**Holy Ghost**'. But, in **1611**, when the **A.V.** was published, the word '**ghost**' didn't mean what it means today!

Because English is a living language, not only do some words fall into disuse as new ones are created, but words also change their meaning, and the word '**ghost**' is one of those words whose meaning has changed. In **1611**, the word '**ghost**' meant '**guest**', therefore, when Jesus told His disciples that He was about to leave them,

He went on to say, '**I will not leave you comfortless, (like orphans) I will pray to the Father and He will send another comforter even the Holy Guest, who shall remain with you forever**'. **John 14:16**.

Now this means that, when the Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost, **Acts 2**, the Holy Guest came! And here is something that I find rather amusing!

When so-called '**Pentecostal**' congregations hold their '**tarrying meetings**', or their prayer meetings, in which they plead for the Holy Spirit to '**descend**' upon them, they are pleading for Someone to come, who came almost 2000 years ago, and who has **never gone away**! These people will wait in vain for '**a new Pentecostal experience**', because Pentecost was a onetime event which will never be repeated.

The Holy Spirit and the Scriptures Theories About Inspiration

1. Dynamic inspiration.

'Mental stimulation that moves artists to compose, paint, write'. William Wordsworth. *Daffodils*.

Oxford dictionary. Inspiration is '**exalted thought inspiration continues**'.

2. Thought inspiration.

'God placed ideas into the **MINDS** of men and left them to express those ideas in their own words'. Not infallible!

3. Neo-orthodox inspiration. Karl Barth.

'The Bible contains mistakes and therefore it is not literally true.' 'God speaks to us through the Bible, but the words only become '**true**' as they are understood by the individual reader.'

4. Naturalistic inspiration.

The **most extreme** view of inspiration, which really amounts to an **outright denial** of inspiration! The people who hold this view claim that '**The Bible is just a book like any other book and no more 'special' than any other book**'.

5. **Verbal or plenary inspiration. Total, complete.** The view which Christians have held for many centuries. Critics say they oppose this because it is **too mechanical**. An **ambassador sent to represent his country** carried his **credential**. Perhaps also an **official** communication from his government. He doesn't speak for himself, the letters he carried are studied minutely. In matters of state, the words in a communication are measured and weighed!

God said to Jeremiah 'I have put my words into your mouth'. Jeremiah 1:9. This is **guaranteed absolute accuracy and precision**.

Before Jesus went to the cross, He had a last, intimate meeting with His disciples, during which, because He knew that they were soon to be shocked and depressed by the events that were soon to take place, gave them an amazing promise.

He said, 'I not leave you like orphans, **'comfortless.'** I will send you another comforter, **'parakletos'** who shall stay with you forever, even the Spirit of truth.' John 14:17. In this way Jesus signalled the **end** of His own earthly mission and the **beginning** of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the world, so that today, **we** are living in the age of the Spirit's ministry.

Now bear in mind that the **Spirit of God**, the Holy Spirit, has been active in every period of the world's history.

1. Active in the creation, as the organiser, life-giver and life-sustainer. **'When you send your Spirit, they are created'**. Psalm 104:30.
2. Involved in the giving of the moral law at Sinai, the 10 commandment law. The tablets were written by the finger of God. **Exodus 31:18**.
3. Involved in the giving of the ceremonial law of the tabernacle and later the temple. **Exodus 20-31+35-40 / Leviticus 1-17 / Numbers 6-10**.
4. Involved in the judicial law, the appointment of the elders to assist Moses. **Numbers 11**.
5. As to the **source** the origin of the Scriptures, Paul wrote to Timothy in **2 Timothy 3:15+16** **'All scripture is given by inspiration of God.'** The inspiration of the prophets, from Samuel onwards.
6. And, as for the **method**, in **2 Peter 1:21**, the apostle wrote, **'the prophecy did not come by the will of man but holy men spoke from God, as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.'**

So I want us to think a little more about the meaning of **inspiration**, because the view that people hold on the subject of inspiration determines their attitude towards the authority of the Scriptures, because it is impossible to separate the inspiration and authority.

The origin of any document determines its authority

If the **66 books** which comprise your Bible were merely **human** productions, no matter how religious, wise, or good the authors were, the Bible has only human authority and men would have the right to accept or reject whatever portions they wished, on the grounds that no human being is infallible, and therefore what a man writes might well contain errors.

If, on the other hand, we accept the Bible as having been inspired by the Holy Spirit, we must also accept that it is true and is authoritative, because we cannot believe that the Spirit of Truth would be responsible for publishing a lie.

Now, if I were to ask you **if you believe that the Bible was written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit?** I think I know what your answer would be. I think I may take it for granted that your answer would be **'Yes!'** because you know what Paul told Timothy. **'All scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for...'** 2 Timothy 3:16

Yes! I know that some modern translations don't say, **'All scripture is inspired by God'** but say, instead, **'Every scripture inspired by God, is profitable...'** **Does that really make a difference?**

The question we need to ask is **what does the word 'Scripture' mean?** There are liberal theologians who point out that the word **'scripture'** is the translation of the Greek, the word **'grammo'**, as in telegram, simply means **'writing'**, and so they solemnly tell us something that common sense has already told us, namely that not everything that has been written has been inspired by God.

And so they continue, **'It is only those scriptures that He has inspired that are profitable'**.

But, in fact, that is a pointless argument! No intelligent person would claim that **everything** that has ever been written has been inspired by God. And Paul, certainly, would not be so foolish as to claim that it is! In the previous verse, **verse 15** in **2 Timothy 3**, he makes it obvious what he means.

There he expressed his approval of the fact that from childhood, Timothy had **'known the sacred writings'** i.e. the holy Scriptures. The **'hiera grammata'**, the Holy Scriptures. We know that not everything that has been written is **'holy'** divinely inspired!

I recall that when one of the **Harry Potter** books was about to become available, some admirers of **'Harry Potter'** could hardly wait! And, by all accounts, that particular volume contained a great deal of writing, more than 900 pages. **900 pages of 'scripture'**? I don't think so! **900 pages of 'writing'**? **Yes!** In the ordinary sense of the word **'scripture,' 'that which is written'**.

But 'scripture' in the sense meant by Paul? Certainly not! I don't think so! **And 'inspired by God'?** Again, certainly not! We must understand that Paul was using the word, **'grammo'** in a purely religious context, and neither Timothy nor any other sincere Christian of that time, would have any problem understanding what he was saying, or to which **'writings'** he was referring.

He was referring to the Scriptures we have today in this Book, the Bible, and there is no sound reason whatsoever, either grammatically or theologically for abandoning the old translation. **'All scripture is inspired by God'**. But here is my next question!

What do you mean by 'inspired by God'? In what way is the Bible inspired? How was it inspired? We ask this question because there are several theories concerning the nature of inspiration.

1. Inspired writers.

Some religious people will say. **'I believe that the writers of the Bible were inspired, but inspired in much the same way that Mozart, Shakespeare, Rembrandt, Wordsworth, Burns and all the other great authors, poets, musicians and painters were inspired'**.

By the way, if you go to the dictionary for a definition of the word **'inspiration'**, you will read that inspiration is **'A supposed force or influence on poet's artists and musicians, stimulating creative activity. Inspiration is exalted thought.'**

Let me suggest that you should never go to an **English Dictionary** or any dictionary of any other modern language, for that matter, for a definition of religious words because if you do, you will almost certainly receive misinformation!

My **Oxford Dictionary** tells me that the word **'baptism'** means **'to sprinkle the forehead with water'**, and that **'to baptise'** means, to **'give a name or a nickname, to christen'**.

Is inspiration nothing more than that? Exalted thought? An influence that stimulates creative activity? **William Wordsworth**, one of our most popular poets, known as **'the Lakeland poet'**, lived in **Dove Cottage**, not far from **Derwent water**, and one day, somewhere near a spot known as **'Friar's Crag'**, he saw a wonderful bank of golden daffodils.

He was **'inspired'** by the sight of the flowers to write his **'Ode to the Daffodils'**. **Is that the sort of 'inspiration' we have in the Bible?** If it is, the Bible loses its authority.

If the men who wrote the books of the Bible simply responded to some sort of mental stimulation, visual or audible stimulation just like the poets and musicians and artists, then, I say again, it loses its authority. Let say again, **authority depends on origin**. The authority of the Bible depends on how it came into existence.

If the books of the Bible were written by men and were merely the products of men's minds, they possess only human authority. **If**, on the other hands, they were written under the **inspiration** of the Holy Spirit, and the **mind of God** is behind them, they are backed by the **authority of God**.

The apostle Peter clears this up for us, when he writes, ‘The prophecy did not come by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God’. 2 Peter 1:21.

Authorship determines origin and both determine authority. The **impulse** of man. The **will** of man. The **words** of man, define the **authority** of man. The **impulse** of the Holy Spirit, the **will** of the Holy Spirit, the **words** of the Holy Spirit declare the **authority of God**.

2. Inspired thought.

It claims that the Bible is inspired in the sense that the Holy Spirit put the thoughts into the minds of the prophets and apostles and writers, and left them to express the thoughts in their own words. This sounds very reasonable and impressive.

But just how reasonable is it? And more importantly, how true is it? Indeed, is such a thing even possible? Let us try an experiment! And please don’t laugh! I am going to think about something, and I want you to tell me what I am thinking! **Are you having difficulty?** Then I will think a bit harder and attempt to transfer my thought to your mind! Let’s try telepathy! Thought Transference! **It isn’t working, is it?**

I have not been successful in transferring waves of thought from my mind to yours. **Why not?** Because thoughts can only be conveyed in words. We might stay here all day, I can continue to think and you can try to figure out what I am thinking and we should end up with nothing! But, if I express my thought ‘**in words**’ that is a different matter. And that is how the apostles and prophets received the word of God.

God **spoke** to the prophet **Isaiah**, about ‘**My Words, which I have put into your mouth**’. **Isaiah 59:21. Zechariah 7:12**, refers to ‘**the words which the Lord of Hosts (YHVH Sabaoth) sent by His Spirit through the former prophets**’.

Not even God can place a thought into man’s mind without using the means by which thought is conveyed. You can’t have music without notes. You can’t have mathematics without figures. You can’t have thoughts without words.

3. Neo-orthodox inspiration.

This is the theory that was advanced by **Karl Barth** the German theologian and the people who have accepted his theory are usually known as **Barthians**. This theory claims that there are errors in the Scriptures, and, therefore, the Bible is not literally true.

It claims that God ‘**speaks**’ to us through the Bible and uses the Scriptures as a means of communicating with us, but the words only become ‘**true**’ as they are understood by the individual reader. The effect of this doctrine is that no two readers of the Scriptures see them in the same light, and it leaves the individual reader to be the final authority on what is true.

4. Naturalistic inspiration.

This is the most extreme view of inspiration, and in fact, it amounts to an outright denial of inspiration. The people who hold it tell us that ‘**the Bible is really just a book, like any other book**’, and is no more inspired than any other book.

They tell us that although God may have given the writers special ability on religious subjects, the book is still a human production. It is ‘**just another book on religion**’, describing the religious thoughts and experiences of men from a past period of history.

And what is the result of this theory? It completely destroys and denies both the inspiration and the authority of the Scriptures, so that the Bible becomes nothing more than an interesting story of religious history.

5. Verbal inspiration.

The orthodox doctrine which has been held all down the centuries. Remember what Peter wrote, ‘**The prophecy did not come by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.**’ 2 Peter 1:21. And, again Paul’s words to Timothy. ‘**All scripture is given by inspiration of God.**’ 2 Timothy 3:15.

This means that the Holy Spirit didn’t merely give His servants messages which were left for them to deliver in their own words, but that they were told what to say!

In Galatians 1:11+12 Paul wrote, 'The Gospel that I preached is not man's Gospel, for I did not receive it from man, neither was I taught it, but it came through a revelation from Jesus Christ'.

And to the Corinthians he wrote, 1 Corinthians 2:12+13, 'We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is of God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom, but taught by the Spirit'.

This is known as 'plenary inspiration' or 'verbal inspiration'. And there are some theologians who don't like this doctrine! They object to verbal inspiration because, they say 'it is too mechanical'. It makes the apostles and prophets simply mouth-pieces for God.

Do you think that an apostle or a prophet would have objected to being a mouth-piece, a spokesman for God? Would you not regard it as an honour to be so used by God?

Indeed, in the world of International Affairs, this is exactly how an ambassador functions! When the new ambassador of a foreign country comes to the Court of St. James, to present himself to Queen Elizabeth as the representative of his country, he hands over documents given to him by his government. He does not make a case for himself or speak on his own behalf. He presents the words given to him by his superiors.

For instance, God was about to send the prophet Jeremiah to deliver a warning to His people. Jeremiah 1:9 'Behold I have put My Words into Your Mouth'. Did God make Jeremiah His mouthpiece? Certainly He did!

This commission caused Jeremiah to experience so much grief that he didn't like it very much! But he tells us that he simply had to deliver the message that God had given to him.

So it is when an ambassador is sent to another country, with 'a formal message', from his government or his sovereign. He is commissioned to deliver a carefully worded statement, which in international diplomacy, every word is significant, and which will be carefully scrutinized to determine exactly what it means.

He doesn't deliver the message in his own words, but exactly as it has been given to him to deliver. The reason for this is there must be 'precision, absolute accuracy'. It is imperative that there must be no room for mistakes or misunderstanding.

And when a prophet of God stood before the people and said, 'listen to the word of the Lord,' he was making it perfectly clear that he wasn't responsible for the message he carried. And this formal introduction ensured that the message he delivered was exactly what God wanted to have said so that there were no mistakes.

Am I saying that every word in the Bible is inspired by God? Sometimes I have heard Christians who have become so passionate in their defence of the inspiration of the Bible, make very rash statements. 'I believe the Bible from cover to cover!' 'I believe that 'every word' in the Bible is the Word of God!'

And when I hear the second statement, I feel I have to ask, do you really? Let's put this to the test! Let's look at Genesis 3:4, 'You will not die, for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God'. Are those the words of God? Well then, if they were not the words of God, did God inspire the Serpent to speak them? Can we really describe them as 'the word of God'?

Let us try a New Testament example. In Acts 5 we have the story of Ananias and his wife Sapphira. Ananias has already paid a terrible price for having lied to the Holy Spirit. Now, when his wife comes in, Peter asks her a question concerning the price that she and her husband had received when they sold a piece of land. And she lies, and says 'yes! That was the price!' Acts 5:8.

Now! Who was responsible for leading Ananias to 'lie to the Holy Spirit'? Who caused Sapphira to lie to Peter? God? Or Satan? Were these two people led by the Holy Spirit? Their words are in the Bible. Are they the word of God? Where does inspiration come in here?

Well, neither the words of Satan to Eve, nor those of Ananias and his wife to Peter, were the words of God. What they said was not inspired. But, the record of what they said was inspired! Let me put this way.

The Bible isn't only the inspired record of the words of God. It's also God's inspired record of words. The Holy Spirit **didn't** inspire the utterance of every word found in the Bible, but He did inspire the record of what was said.

The Holy Spirit is Deity

'But Peter said, 'Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.'... Then Peter said to her, 'How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.' Acts 5:3+4+9.

Notice that Peter used the terms 'Holy Spirit' and 'God' interchangeably. He perceived the Spirit to be God. The Holy Spirit is described as possessing characteristics which are unique to God.

He is 'omniscient' that is He knows all things. 'But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God' 1 Corinthians 2:10+11.

The Spirit is also 'omnipresent', that is He is everywhere. 'Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me'. Psalm 139:7-10.

The Spirit of the Lord is also 'eternal'. 'How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?' Hebrews 9:14.

We also find the deity of the Spirit demonstrated in His workings. He was involved in the creation of the world. 'The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters'. Genesis 1:2. Or, 'The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life'. Job 33:4.

It was through the Spirit that miracles occurred. 'But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you'. Matthew 12:28.

And, 'For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient -- in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ'. Romans 15:18+19.

The Spirit had a hand in the redemption of man. 'How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?' Hebrews 9:14. Notice that the Son, the Spirit, and the Father are all mentioned in this one verse working together to bring about the redemption of man. Yet, each are listed independently.

Finally, the Spirit is involved in the regeneration of man. 'Jesus answered, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.' John 3:5.

And, 'But when the kindness and the love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life'. Titus 3:4-7.

Once again notice in this last passage that the Father, the Spirit, and the Son are all mentioned working together for the salvation of men.

The Holy Spirit is a divine person and this is evidenced by the following factors.

1. The Spirit acts in a personal way.

a. He can speak, Matthew 10:20 / 1 Timothy 4:1.

- b. Teach, [John 14:26](#).
 - c. Bear witness, [John 15:26](#).
 - d. Guide, hear and declare, [John 16:13](#).
 - e. Send, [Acts 10:20](#).
 - f. Forbid, [Acts 16:6](#).
 - g. Search and know, [1 Corinthians 2:11](#).
 - h. Will, [1 Corinthians 12:11](#).
 - i. Help, [Romans 8:2](#), and
 - j. Love, [Romans 15:30](#).
2. There are many passages which describe the Holy Spirit as being the recipient of actions which are applicable **only** of a personal entity.
- a. The Spirit can be grieved, [Ephesians 4:30](#).
 - b. Lied to, [Acts 5:3](#).
 - c. Spoken against, [Matthew 12:32](#).
 - d. Resisted, [Acts 7:50](#), and
 - e. Insulted, [Hebrews 10:29](#).
3. The Holy Spirit is frequently mentioned in contexts in which other persons are discussed.
- a. Of the Spirit, Jesus said, '[He shall glorify me](#)'. [John 16:14](#).
 - b. If the '[me](#)' (Christ) represents a person, why doesn't the '[he](#)' (the Spirit) likewise denote a person?
 - c. Certain inspired leaders in the early church wrote, '[It seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us . . .](#)' [Acts 15:28](#).
 - d. The Spirit is as personal as the '[us](#).'

False teaching about the Spirit

In 1856, [William Arthur](#) wrote a book entitled '[The Tongue of Fire](#)' which, if you will excuse the expression, '[reignited](#)' interest in the doctrine of the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit. Many religious bodies suddenly rediscovered such scriptural expressions as, '[baptism of the Holy Spirit](#)', '[indwelling of the Spirit](#)', '[filled with the Spirit](#)', '[gifts of the Spirit](#)', etc.

Unfortunately however, the churches which like to be known as '[Evangelical](#)', along with the so-called '[Charismatic](#)' groups which quickly emerged in the early 1900's, used **and continue to use**, these Scriptural terms to propagate teaching about the Holy Spirit that is far from scriptural, and this has had the effect of causing preachers and teachers to appear reluctant to deal with the subject, lest they be misunderstood and are accused of holding suspect views, or even of leaning towards the '[Charismatic](#)' movement.

Jehovah's Witnesses

One of the most fundamental errors regarding the Holy Spirit is the tendency of some groups to deny His very personality. A '[Watchtower publication](#)' asserts that, '[the holy spirit is the active force of God. It is not a person but is a powerful force that God causes to emanate from himself to accomplish his holy will](#)' ([Reasoning from the Scriptures 1985, 81](#)).

What Do Jehovah's Witnesses Believe About the Holy Spirit? Jehovah's Witnesses deny the deity, personality, and masculinity of the Holy Spirit. They teach that the 'holy spirit' (always lower case) is merely an impersonal force.

Here is an excerpt from an article on the official 'Watchtower Society' website. 'What is God's holy spirit? In its opening words, the Bible speaks of the holy spirit, also rendered 'God's active force', as 'moving to and fro over the surface of the waters.' Genesis 1:2.

'In the account of Jesus' baptism, while God is described as being in 'the heavens,' the holy spirit appears 'descending like a dove' upon Jesus. Matthew 3:16+17. Additionally, Jesus spoke of the holy spirit as a 'helper.' John 14:16.

'These and other Bible passages have led some to conclude that the holy spirit is a person, just as God, Jesus, and the angels are individual spirit persons. In fact, for centuries some of the most influential religions of Christendom have attributed personality to the holy spirit. Despite this long-standing doctrine, many church members remain confused, and some even disagree with their religious leaders.'

'An honest Bible reader cannot help but conclude that the holy spirit differs from official church descriptions of it as a person.'

As in many other instances, the Jehovah's Witnesses' New World Translation of the Bible changes the words of the original Scriptures to support their false teaching.

They do so from the very first verses of Genesis, 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.' Genesis 1:1+2. NKJV.

'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth proved to be formless and waste and there was darkness upon the surface of the watery deep; and God's active force was moving to and fro over the surface of the waters.' Genesis 1:1+2. NWT.

The 'Watchtower Society's' Bible uses the words 'holy spirit', 'spirit', and 'helper' (all lower case) to impose its erroneous view upon Scripture, and goes through linguistic gymnastics to avoid attributing personality to the Holy Spirit.

Here are but three of hundreds of examples.

'But when the Helper (KJV, 'Comforter') comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.' John 15:26. NKJV.

'When the helper arrives that I will send you from the Father, the spirit of the truth, which proceeds from the Father, that one will bear witness about me'. John 15:26. NWT.

'And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever - the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.' John 14:16+17. NKJV.

'And I will request the Father and he will give you another helper to be with you forever, the spirit of the truth, which the world cannot receive, because it neither beholds it nor knows it. You know it, because it remains with you and is in you.' John 14:16+17. NWT.

'Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.' Romans 8:27. NKJV.

'Yet he who searches the hearts knows what the meaning of the spirit is, because it is pleading in accord with God for holy ones.' Romans 8:27. NWT.

The word translated 'mind' in the KJV and NKJV is 'phronema', which denotes the seat of reasoned thinking, and the thoughts and purposes it produces, never 'meaning' as in 'the message expressed.'

But because of their doctrine of the ‘**holy spirit**’ the editors of the ‘**New World Translation**’ were forced to also mistranslate ‘**phronema**’ in the other places it appears, **twice in Romans 8:6, once in Romans 8:7**, making nonsense out of those verses as well.

Christian Science

Mary Baker Eddy, founder of ‘**Christian Science**,’ characterized the third person of the Trinity as ‘**Divine Science**’. This Science of God and man is the Holy Ghost, which reveals and sustains the unbroken and eternal harmony of both God and the universe. For the Christian Scientist, the Holy Spirit is just the unfolding of the thoughts and mind of God, the Divine Science, but by no means a person on its own.

Mormons

Mormon doctrine distinguishes between the Holy Ghost and the Holy Spirit, even though there is no biblical distinction. This teaching actually derives from the **King James Version** of the Bible. The translators translated the same Greek words ‘**Hagios Pneuma**’ sometimes ‘**Holy Spirit**’ and sometimes ‘**Holy Ghost**.’

The Holy Ghost is a personal being, a god, although without a body of flesh and bone. The Holy Spirit is a force of God, the ‘**power**’ or ‘**presence**’ of God.

Parley Pratt, one of Mormonism’s original ‘**apostles**,’ once described the Holy Spirit as a force like ‘**magnetism**’ or ‘**electricity**.’ He further spoke of the Spirit as ‘**a divine fluid**’ and ‘**impersonal energy**’.

Christadelphians

The Holy Spirit is not a person but a ‘**...radiant visible power from the Father. It is an unseen power emanating from the Deity, filling all space, and by which God is everywhere present. It is the medium by which God created all things...**’

‘**The Spirit is not a ‘separate’ or ‘other’ person. It is God’s own radiant power, ever out flowing from Him, by which His ‘everywhereness’ is achieved.**

‘**The Spirit is personal in that it is of God Himself: it is not personal in the sense of being some other person within the Godhead**’. (The Christadelphians: What They Believe and Preach, by Harry Tennant page 115).

Like Jehovah’s Witnesses, they refer to the Holy Spirit as ‘**it**’. So they have no Holy Spirit to assist them in their study and interpretation of the Scriptures! Because the Bible teaches the Holy Spirit is personal, intelligent and can speak.

Attempts to create Christian unity

The ‘**Denominational World**’ admits that ‘**division**’ exists among the many sects and parties that make up so-called Christendom. And they arrange ‘**committees**’ and ‘**conferences**’ at which they discuss how they might achieve ‘**unity**’ between them. The Church of England and the Methodist Church spent years exploring plans that would enable them to unity. Other denominationalists have gone down the same road and arrived nowhere!

But, the fact is that the ‘**body**’ of Christ **is united!** **1 Corinthians 12:13** ‘**For by one Spirit we are baptised into One Body**’. When we were baptised, we were baptised ‘**by the order of**’ or ‘**by the command of the One Spirit**’. And everyone who has scripturally obeyed the Gospel has been placed by the Holy Spirit into the one body. This logically means that the One Body consists only of those who have been baptised into Christ.

Galatians 3:26+27 ‘**You all are the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus, for as many as have been baptised into Christ.**’

Notice **two facts** here.

1. The Statement that, the **children of God**, are those who are **in Christ Jesus**.

This passage is often misquoted and misunderstood. It is quoted as though it says, that we are the children of God ‘**by having faith in**’ Christ Jesus. In other words, as though having faith in Christ makes us children of God. That is **not** what the passage is saying! It is **not** talking about salvation by faith.

This verse **locates** sonship with God. It tells us **where, when** and **how** we become sons of God and **all are one in Christ**. **Where are we the children of God according to the principle of faith?** Answer, ‘**in Christ Jesus**’.

When are we the children of God? Answer, **when** we are **in Christ Jesus**. How do we come into Christ? By being 'baptised into Christ'.

2. So! **Who are the children of God?** 'As many as are baptised into Christ'.

That phrase 'as many as' is important. 'Hosos', 'how much or how many.' We find it no fewer than 23 times, from **Matthew** to **Revelation**. It means, no more and no fewer. No more and no less. Example, **Romans 8:14** 'as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.'

Therefore, by the order of the Holy Spirit we are all baptised into the One Body, and those who have been baptised into Christ and **only** those are the sons and daughters of God, created thus according to the principle of faith. And the same Spirit urges us to **guard the unity of the One Body**.

Take care to keep the unity which He Himself has already created. The different churches and religious organisations that men have created may decide to unite with each other, forget their fundamental differences and settle for a superficial union but that is **not** the unity of the Spirit.

How can the individual Christian help to keep this unity?

1. By being 'filled with the Spirit.' **Ephesians 5:18**.

Some religious people think that this has to do with some sort of 'second blessing', which they must seek to obtain subsequent to being saved. In other words, they have been taught that they must first be **saved**, and then **pray for the 'second blessing'**, which they think means 'the filling of the Spirit'.

But the filling of the Spirit is **not** a one-time event. The tense of the words should be understood as saying, '**keep on being filled by or with the Spirit**'.

Remember the **first time** the New Testament records the coming of the Holy Spirit, Pentecost. There was a tremendous **sound**, which filled the house and was heard outside of the house, so that the people congregated on the house to find out what was happening.

The apostles emerged from the house and must have made their way to the temple probably to the '**Court of the Gentiles**', which would be large enough to accommodate the size of the crowd which **Acts 2** indicates came together.

The crowd **heard** the apostles, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, proclaiming the wonderful deeds of God. And they could not understand what was happening. We are told that they were '**amazed**'. '**Amazement**' is the loss of the ability to collect ones thought. They didn't understand what was happening.

They were '**perplexed**'. When their minds began to function they recognised that they could find no explanation for what was happening. They '**criticised**'. The only thing they could find to say was, '**These men are full of new wine**'. They are drunk!

And what was Peter's response? Not in the way **you** think are they drunk! It is only nine o'clock in the morning! Yes! They are drunk! But not with the spirit you are thinking about. This is what the prophet **Joel** spoke about. They are '**filled with the Spirit of God**.' **Acts 2:4**.

Have we ever been accused of being drunk with our faith? The world today sees very little in the church that amazes it, perplexes it or moves it to criticism. The world is not at all '**critical**' of the church, because the church is not disturbing it! If it thinks about the church at all, it sees it as something like a prehistoric, out-of-date, harmless old body.

Gone are the days when a Spirit-filled church, so worried the world that people said of the Christians, '**these men have turned the world upside down and now they have come here also**.' **Acts 17:6**.

Again, the matter has not been helped by the way in which the Holy Spirit is described by those churches that are usually regarded as '**orthodox**' or '**traditional**' in their views, because they often refer to Him as '**the Third Person in the Godhead**', implying that the Father is the **First** Person, the Son is the **Second** Person, whilst the Holy Spirit is **number Three** in the order.

We must understand that the Holy Spirit should never be regarded as ‘third’ in importance or rank, nor should He be thought of as being in any way inferior in nature to either the Father or the Son. The only way in which He might reasonably be described as the ‘Third’ Person in the Godhead, is in relation to the time of His coming and the commencement of His personal ministry.

The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

We have seen that ever since New Testament times, the theme of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, has suffered more neglect than any other Bible subject, and only in relatively modern times has the world of Christendom become really aware of the Spirit’s existence, with the unfortunate consequence that a great many unscriptural doctrines about the Holy Spirit have been put into circulation.

We have also seen that the Holy Spirit, is in no way inferior to God, or the Word of God, but has the **nature** of God, capable of all the **emotions** and revealing all the characteristics of **intelligence**. He **guides**, has a **will** and so is able to **direct**, **forbid**, **speak**, **choose**, and demonstrates all the characteristics of a rational, **reasoning person**.

He is an **emotional being**, capable of **loving** and capable, also, of being **grieved** and even **sinned against**. And we have seen that we are living, today, in the period of His ministry, about which we shall be saving more on very shortly.

All of this is revealed in the New Testament and we must never forget that all that we know about Him, or can come to know about Him, is found in the New Testament Scriptures, the writing of He Himself is inspired, so that we may rightly say that the New Testament is a sort of autobiography of the Holy Spirit.

In **Genesis 1:2**, we see that the ‘**Spirit of God**’ was also involved in creation. The Hebrew word for ‘**Spirit**’ is often translated as ‘**wind**’ or ‘**breath**’ in the Old Testament. The same word is found in **Psalms 33:6**, where we again catch a glimpse of the Spirit’s work in creation, ‘**By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath (Spirit) of His mouth.**’

The next verse of this psalm continues, ‘**He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; He lays up the deep in storehouses**’. **Psalm 33:7**. Certainly, this should remind us of how ‘**the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters**’ in **Genesis 1:2**.

If we look closer at the word ‘**hovering**,’ we find that it conveys the idea of a bird sitting in a nest, hovering and brooding over her eggs, caring for the new lives. The same word is used to describe how ‘**an eagle stirs up its nest, and hovers over its young**’ in **Deuteronomy 32:11**.

What a beautiful picture of God preparing to bring life into the world through His Spirit! God designed all of creation for life, our life. ‘**By His Spirit (God) adorned the heavens.**’ **Job 26:13**, and they were designed with us in mind. ‘**For this is what the LORD says—he who created the heavens, he is God; he who fashioned and made the earth, he founded it; he did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited**’ **Isaiah 45:18**.

On this fascinating topic, we should also note that Scripture describes a similar ‘**hovering**’ of the Holy Spirit in one of the greatest miracles of all time, the miraculous conception of Jesus Christ. ‘**And the angel answered and said to Mary, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you**’. **Luke 1:35**.

Just as God worked through Jesus and the Holy Spirit to bring life into the dark, formless world at creation, so also He now offers eternal life to any who repent and believe through the Spirit in the name of Jesus Christ. **John 3:5 / John 6:63**.

Of course, as we shall see, the Old Testament Scriptures, too, were written under His inspiration, and we shall be looking at what we may learn from the Old Testament, concerning the activity of the Spirit of God, in Old Testament times, that is from **Genesis** and its account of creation, through to the work of the **last prophet** of the Old Testament, **Malachi**.

I hope you may have noticed that I said, ‘**the Spirit of God in Old Testament times**’. That is because in the Old Testament, He is not designated or identified as ‘**The Holy Spirit**’, but is described as ‘**the Spirit**’, or ‘**the Spirit of God**’.

Yes! You can, indeed, find the phrase, ‘**holy Spirit**’ in the Old Testament in **three places**. But you will notice that the word ‘**holy**’ does not begin with a capital letter. Nor can you find the term, ‘**THE Holy Spirit**’. The word, ‘**holy**’, begins with a small ‘**h**’, because the word is used in an adjectival sense and **not** as a title, or designation.

The first person who is said to have used the term was **David. Psalm 51:11**, David pleads with God, ‘**take not your holy Spirit from me**’. This was his ‘**psalm of repentance**’ after his sin with **Bathsheba**, the wife of **Uriah**.

David knew what happened to King Saul, he knew that Saul had been disowned by God and he was afraid that God might also abandon him because of his terrible sin. The Scriptures tell us that ‘**the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul**’, **1 Samuel 16:14** and the prophet Samuel never again went to see him.

Remember at this time David was the King, the Lord’s Anointed One. He was the man on whose young head had been poured the anointing oil which had been the symbol in its gentle flow and sweet perfume, of his setting apart for high office in the service of God. And now, he is very much afraid that this special privilege and symbol of God’s presence had been forfeited, might be taken back, lost! ‘**Take not your holy Spirit from me**’.

The other **two occasions** when the expression ‘**holy Spirit**’ is used are found in the book of the prophet **Isaiah, Isaiah 63:10+11**. ‘**Yet they rebelled and grieved his holy Spirit.**’ ‘**Where is he who set his holy Spirit among them.**’

This is a very significant statement, because it reveals an important truth, namely that in Old Testament times, the Holy Spirit took hold of men to use them for specific tasks. He **didn’t** indwell them; He didn’t come to ‘**live in**’ them as in the New Testament times with Christians.

And, what is truly remarkable, is that the Spirit of God took hold of men for special purposes, without reference to their character. Sometimes they were good men. Sometimes they were not so good! But He took them and used them to accomplish His purposes. This one of the amazing differences between the people of God of Old Testament times and the people of God today, that is, the church.

Paul told the Corinthian Christians in **1 Corinthians 3:16**, ‘**Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in your midst?**’ so, the Holy Spirit indwells the church as the temple of God.

But again, he tells them, in similar terms in **1 Corinthians 6:19+20** ‘**Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own, you were bought at a price. Therefore, honour God with your bodies.**’

I repeat, then, that in Old Testament times the Spirit of God is **never** said to **fill**, or **dwell** in the nation, the people of God, but only used particular people, at particular times, for particular purposes.

The Age of the Spirit’s Ministry

In **John 14:15+16**, having in mind His own imminent return to the Father after the fulfilment of His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus spoke to His followers about the coming of the Holy Spirit. He promised His followers, ‘**I will pray the Father and He will send you another Comforter**’.

The word that is used, ‘**parakletos**’, translated ‘**Comforter**’ in the **A.V.** and the **R.V.**, describes ‘**one called alongside to help**’.

Furthermore, Jesus promised that when the Spirit of Truth came, He would ‘**abide**’ with believers ‘**forever**’. The word ‘**meno**’, ‘**abide**’, means remain permanently. He also explained, in **John 16:7-15**, that the Holy Spirit’s ministry would be to ‘**convict the world concerning sin, righteousness and judgment**’. **John 16:8**.

The means of the Spirit’s convicting the world is simply in this, He will convict the world, not by direct work upon their hearts, but as the event shows, **Acts 2:37**, through the life of the apostles, declaring the wonderful works of God. The Holy Spirit came not ‘**unto the world**’ but ‘**unto the apostles**.’

The world **couldn’t** receive the Spirit directly, **John 14:17**, and never can, ‘**as the world**’. The apostles received Him, and through their testimony He reaches the world. Personal pronouns referring to the Holy Spirit throughout these pages emphasise the personal nature of the Spirit. The Trinitarian concept of three persons in the Godhead is in these verses.

Read **John 16:14+15** 'He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.'

John 16:8 'When he comes, he will convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment.'

1. Convict.

Regarding this word, it involves the conceptions of authoritative examination, of unquestionable proof, of decisive judgment, and of punitive power. He who 'convicts' another, places the truth in a clear light before him, so that it must be seen and acknowledged as truth. He who then rejects, rejects it with his eyes open and at his peril.

The issue of whether the world will or will not receive the truth isn't treated here. The Spirit will 'convict' the whole world by witnessing the truth to the whole creation, but every man, through the exercise of his own free will, will determine his own destiny by his reaction to the truth, either receiving it or rejecting it.

2. Sin, righteousness and judgment.

The comprehensiveness of these terms is boundless. Here are the **two fundamentals** of man's spiritual condition and the **two options**, or alternatives open to him. The Spirit convicts of sin, revealing man's fallen state and bondage to Satan, and showing his total helplessness to achieve through his own efforts any healing of his condition.

The Spirit also convicts of righteousness by revealing the mystery of how a man may acquire a righteousness not of his own, but being the righteousness of Christ, available to all who receive and obey the Gospel, thus being inducted 'into Christ,' and identified with Christ as Christs.

Over against these three words stand **three proper names**, **Adam**, **Christ**, and **Satan**. Through Adam came sin, through Christ came righteousness and upon Satan the penalty of ultimate judgment shall fall, **John 16:11**. The 'world' acting through its representatives, had charged Christ as a sinner, **John 9:24**.

Its leaders trusted that they were 'righteous' **Luke 18:9**, and they were at the point of giving sentence against the 'prince of Life' **Acts 3:15**, as a malefactor, **John 18:30**. At this point the **threefold error**, **Acts 3:17**, which the Spirit was to reveal and reprove, had brought at last its fatal fruit.

That ministry commenced on the Day of Pentecost, as **Acts 2** reveals. The Holy Spirit came, as the Lord had promised. And the Holy Spirit has never left! What is more, He will not leave until the close of the Christian Age, when the Lord Himself returns.

So, we see, then, that the plan of salvation which originated in the mind of the Father, was implemented and fully realised in the life, death and resurrection of the Son, and today it continues to be made effective by the ministry of the Holy Spirit, through the preaching of the Good News.

That Gospel was first presented in its fullness by Peter on the Day of Pentecost, and it was on that day that he announced that those who believed the message, repented and were baptised, would receive not only the forgiveness of their sins, but also the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The gift of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:38

The verse referred to is unquestionably one with which every member in the church of Christ is familiar, having frequently heard it quoted when the Gospel has been preached.

It is, however, a pity that in our anxiety to convince people of their need to obey the Gospel by being baptised in obedience to the Lord's command, **Matthew 28:18-20**, very often only the first part of the verse of **Acts 2:38** is emphasised, 'be baptised for the forgiveness of your sins', whilst the latter part, 'and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit', is hurried over, with sometimes scarcely a mention.

The consequence has been that many members of the church are not as familiar as they ought to be with what the New Testament teaches concerning the Person and work of the Holy Spirit, and people in other religious bodies have even been known to accuse us of not really believing in the Holy Spirit. There are, also, other circumstances that have a bearing on this situation.

Gift not Gifts

As I have already suggested, it is this second promise which many Christians find difficult to understand. Let us notice, therefore, that Peter spoke of the 'gift' not 'gifts' of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2:38 the word 'gift' is the word 'dorea', which is accurately defined as 'free gift'. One translation renders it rather expressively as, 'the plus of the Holy Spirit'.

The word describes the Holy Spirit Himself as the extra gift provided by God, for those who obey the Gospel. Thus, Acts 2:38 doesn't refer to some sort of miraculous or spiritual gift bestowed by the Holy Spirit. It tells us that the Holy Spirit Himself is the Heavenly Father's own gift to His obedient people, given to enable them to live a successful and satisfied Christian life.

The gifts, another subject

When, later, Paul wrote to the Corinthian church about 'spiritual gifts', he was dealing with a very different subject. In 1 Corinthians 12-14, the nine gifts bestowed by the Holy Spirit are described as 'charisma', or 'grace gifts', and it is important to distinguish between the Holy Spirit as God's own gift, and the miraculous gifts which, in the New Testament age, the Spirit Himself bestowed.

Please notice that.

1. The 'charismata' were various miraculous abilities or endowments, which the Holy Spirit Himself gave to individual believers, according to His own will. 1 Corinthians 12:11.
2. Believers did not all receive the same gift(s). 1 Corinthians 12:29+30.
3. Nor were these gifts intended to last. 1 Corinthians 13:8.
4. In contrast, the 'gift of the Holy Spirit' is the gift of God Himself, offered to every obedient believer. Acts 5:32.
5. All are offered the same gift, the indwelling presence of the His Spirit. 1 Corinthians 6:19 / Romans 8:9.
6. And, along with salvation, the gift of the Spirit's presence will continue to be offered until the end of the Christian Age. Acts 2:39.

The purpose of the gift in Acts 2:38

What will this 'gift' do for us? This is a question worthy of a separate study, but think about just two aspects of His ministry.

- a. The Holy Spirit is described as the 'Comforter'. John 14:26. That English word comes to us from the Latin, 'confortis', which literally means, 'with strength'. Thus, the Holy Spirit strengthens us. We need to learn to lean on Him.
- b. Romans 8:26+27 tells us that the Holy Spirit helps us when we pray, taking our faltering, stumbling petitions and presenting them to the Father, as our intercessor. We should make use of His intercession.

If you have obeyed the Gospel and accepted God's gift of forgiveness, the question is, have you also accepted His 'extra' gift?

The Holy Spirit in the church

The title of this part of our study may well have been the Holy Spirit and the church, but the heading chosen is more precise.

1. We have already seen what Jesus said the Holy Spirit would do for the apostles. When they received the promised 'baptism' of the Spirit, their 'overwhelming' by and in the Spirit, they would be qualified and equipped to become the Lord's 'witnesses', because the Holy Spirit would provide the following.
 - a. Remind them, 'give them total recall' of all that He had taught them during His ministry. John 14:26.
 - b. Guide them into all the truth that the Father intended them to receive. 'He shall teach you all things'. John 16:13.
 - c. Reveal to them 'things to come'. John 16:13.

d. **Testify** to Him, bear witness by means of the miracles **they** would be able to perform. **John 15:26+27**. This promise of the miraculous testimony of the Holy Spirit to their preaching of the Gospel was again promised by the Lord, after His resurrection, as recorded in **Mark 16:17+18**.

The passage is sometimes wildly misunderstood by some who claim that believers today are able to perform miracles, especially of the kind mentioned in these two verses.

But if we read the verses in **Mark 16:7**, we see that, at first, His disciples didn't believe the claims of those who said they had seen Him after His resurrection, **Mark 16:11+13+14**. Notice that the Lord rebuked **them** for their unbelief. Then follows His commission, '**Go!**' And He gives the promise of miraculous support to '**those who believe**'.

Hebrews 2:3+4 records that the apostles did believe, and their witness to Jesus and His resurrection was endorsed by the miracles **they** performed. The miracles are described by Paul as '**mighty signs and wonders by the power of the Spirit of God**'. **Romans 15:19**.

2. In **John 16:8-11**, Jesus reveals the work of the Holy Spirit with regards to **the world**.

He sums this up as convicting the world, in respect of **three** powerful facts. These are, **the fact of sin. The fact of righteousness. The fact of judgment**. This means that, whenever and wherever the Gospel is preached faithfully, the Holy Spirit will use the message to convict men and women of the following.

a. The fact that '**all have sinned and come short of the glory of God**'. **Romans 3:23**. Here, '**sin**' is described as a '**missing of the mark**'. The word used is '**hamartia**', '**to fall short**' it means to fail to reach the target, the standard, which God requires. Think of an arrow which falls short of its target!

b. The fact that '**there is none righteous, no, not one**'. **Romans 3:10**. Having no righteousness of our own, we need the righteousness which is made possible by the sacrifice of Christ. **Romans 5:21**.

c. The fact that '**it is appointed to men once to die, but after this the judgment**'. **Hebrews 9:27**. Notice the word '**but**'. It assures us of the certainty of future judgment.

In **Romans 2:16**, Paul speaks about, '**The day when God shall judge the secrets of men, by Jesus Christ...**' and he tells us that this is the message contained in what he calls, '**my gospel**'. In human affairs, evil may seem to escape punishment, but no-one will escape the inevitable judgment of God. See **Romans 2:3**.

However, in the Gospel of Christ, the Holy Spirit declares that, for those '**in Christ, there is no condemnation**'. **Romans 8:1**. The Greek word '**katakrima**' means '**sentence to be served**', because the Lord Jesus has taken our guilt upon Himself, and because we have '**put on Christ in our baptism, we are clothed with His righteousness and, therefore, there is no sentence to serve**'. **Galatians 3:26+27**.

Paul expresses this truth in a powerful way in **Romans 8:33+34**, when he asks, '**who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?**' He asks a series of rhetorical questions, although this is something which does not appear in some translations.

He asks, '**Who shall make any accusation God's chosen ones? GOD, Who Himself justifies them? Who will condemn them? Christ, who dies for them? He who rose from the dead, and who, even now is at the right hand of God making intercession for them?**'

So, the Holy Spirit tells the world, through the proclaiming of the Gospel the following.

a. That sin is real. That God demands righteousness. That there will be a final judgment.

b. But through Christ, **sin** can be forgiven. The guilty can become justified before God, through the sacrifice of Jesus.

c. That, when we are justified we needn't fear the Judgment, because when God Himself declares us righteous, no-one can lay any charge against us.

1 Peter 1:12, refers to the part played by the Holy Spirit in the preaching of the Gospel. He says that those first preachers, 'preached the Gospel, with the Holy Spirit, sent down from heaven'.

3. What, then, is the work of the Holy Spirit where the church is concerned?

Expressing this more directly, what can the Holy Spirit do for us? When we were baptised, Acts 2:38 we received the gift, Greek word 'dorea' which means 'free gift' of the Holy Spirit.

Allow me to point out that this 'free', or 'extra' gift, is God's own gift of the Holy Spirit, to us. It is important that we don't confuse it with the 'charismata', the 'grace gifts', which were miraculous powers that the Holy Spirit Himself gave to the infant church in order to establish it. Romans 1:11. These miraculous powers weren't meant to last forever. 1 Corinthians 13:8-10.

Here in England, when a new building is being erected, they put up scaffolding. But they don't leave the scaffolding up after the building work is finished! So, think of these 'miraculous gifts' as the scaffolding that the Holy Spirit used until the Church was safely established.

Very important! The miracles of the time of the New Testament proved that the Gospel is true, there is a saying in law that says 'a thing once proved is proved for ever'. It is clear that even before all the apostles of Christ died, the miraculous gifts, including, for example, the 'gift of healing' ceased.

First, read Acts 19:11+12, and you will see that Paul had the power to heal. Then, read Philippians 2:25-27, and ask yourself the question, If Paul still had the gift of healing why was he so worried that Epaphroditus, his fellow-servant, was going to die? And why did he not heal Trophimus? 2 Timothy 4:20. 'Trophimus have I felt at Milelus sick'?

The people who like to be known as 'Pentecostals' don't understand the Scriptures. They don't realise that 'the gift of healing' wasn't given to cure the world of sickness, but to convince unbelievers that the Gospel is a message from God. The miraculous powers were 'signs', as Peter said on the Day of Pentecost. Acts 2:22.

Incidentally have you ever wondered why God didn't remove Paul's own 'thorn in the flesh', about which he prayed three times? 2 Corinthians 12:8+9. The healing of the soul is far more important than the healing of the body, which isn't going to last anyway!

But, perhaps we should ask the question, what is meant by 'the indwelling of the Spirit'? Or how does the Holy Spirit enter to control our lives? In Romans 6:16, Paul tells us, 'You are the servants of the One to whom you yield yourselves as servants to obey.'

This means that, as we submit ourselves to the guidance and leading of the Holy Spirit, which is given to us through the Scriptures, which the Spirit Himself has given to us, His control over us grows, and certain changes occur in us.

We develop 'the mind' of the Spirit and we begin to think like Him. We act as He wants us to act, because we know what pleases Him, and we are led by Him. When we are willing to allow the Holy Spirit to control our lives, He guides us through the Word and we find that He really does become our Comforter.

It was Jesus Himself who described the Holy Spirit as 'The Comforter'. John 16:7. He used the word 'parakletos', which means 'one called alongside to help'. The English word, 'Comforter', is formed out of the Latin 'con' 'with', and 'fortis' 'strength', and this gives us a very similar definition. 'The Strengtheners'.

I think that Paul had this in mind when he wrote to the Church at Philippi from Rome. Philippians 1:19. 'I know that through your prayers, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus, this will turn to my salvation'. That word 'supply' is a very interesting word. It is the word 'epichoregia', it is really a three-part word, and, in English, the three parts are 'on chorus lead'.

The basis of the word is 'choregeo', which you will recognize in the word 'choreography', and I am sure that you know what 'choreography' is! Peter uses the same word in 1 Peter 1:5, 'ADD to your faith, virtue, knowledge' etc.

When Paul writes about the ‘supply of the Spirit’, he has in mind all the ‘help’ and all the ‘resources’ that the Holy Spirit can supply. Paul was confident that the Holy Spirit would enable him to survive whatever trials lay before him, whilst he was Nero’s prisoner in Rome.

Incidentally, the word, ‘epichoregia’ was used in ‘Hellenistic Greek’ in several other ways.

1. It was used to describe the ‘abundant, rich provision’ that a wealthy man provided when he invited guests to a feast. It paints a picture of a table groaning under the weight of the rich food upon it! That was his ‘supply’.
2. The word was used in ‘medicine’, to describe the function of the ‘ligaments’ which bind the parts of the body together, the idea of ‘bringing together into unity’.
3. It was also used of the ‘equipment’ that was provided for a soldier to fit him out for battle. Everything he needed with which to face the enemy.

And so, if only we understood what the Holy Spirit can do for us, and how He can help us, our Christian lives would be far less stressful than they sometimes are.

Of course it is difficult to understand **how** the Holy Spirit can ‘indwell’, live in us! But I do not think that this should trouble us! After all, we all surely believe that there is a ‘spirit’, a ‘human spirit’ inhabiting this physical body of ours, in this ‘tabernacle’, as Paul calls it in **2 Corinthians 5**, which is made up of about **sixteen different chemicals**, a **few elements**, and a **lot of water**.

And, if you can explain to me, **how** your own ‘human spirit’ inhabits your body, I might be able to explain to you how the **Holy Spirit** is able to live in you!

But here is something to consider. Turn your Bibles to **John 14:23**. ‘**If a man loves me he will keep My word and My Father will love him and we will come to him and make our abode with him**’. So, **first**, we find that both the Father and the Son, ‘indwell’, live in the Christian who keeps the word of the Saviour.

And then, turn to **1 Corinthians 6:19**. ‘**Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have (received) from God, and you are not your own. You were bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.**’

Have you realised what these verses mean? They mean that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, ‘inhabit’ the obedient child of God! The Godhead lives in you!

But let us look at some passages which tell us very precisely what the Holy Spirit is capable of doing for us.

1. He bears witness that we are **children** of God. **Romans 8:14-18**, because He is the ‘**Spirit who adopts**’.
2. He makes **intercession** when we pray. **Romans 8:26+27**.
3. He **confirms** our sonship, as the **seal** of our salvation. **2 Corinthians 1:22**. A seal does several important things.
 - a. It marks as genuine. **Romans 8:9**.
 - b. It indicates ownership.
 - c. It guarantees security.
 - d. It is a pledge of an intention. ‘**Earnest**’ ‘**arrabon**’. **Ephesians 1:13+14** He is ‘**the Holy Spirit of promise**’.
4. He is the Spirit who sanctifies. **2 Thessalonians 2:13**. **1 Peter 1:2**. ‘**Sanctification of (by) the Spirit.**’ ‘**This is the will of God, even your sanctification.**’ **1 Thessalonians 4:3**. The word ‘**sanctification**’ ‘**hagiasmos**’ reveals that it is related to holiness, because the word, ‘**hagios**’ is the word for ‘**holy**’, and ‘**hagiasmos**’ is also the word for ‘**holiness**’.

What is sanctification? It means ‘separation’. Anything, or anyone, described in the Scriptures as ‘sanctified’, or ‘holy’, has been separated for service. This being the case, the first step in ‘sanctification’ is ‘cleansing’. Hence, the Holy Spirit helps us to cleanse ourselves from the sin in our lives, so that we may effectively serve God.

Listen to Paul to Timothy in **2 Timothy 2:21+22**, ‘If a man cleanses himself from these (see v.22) he shall be a vessel of honour, sanctified and fit for the Master’s use’.

5. This cleansing makes it possible to produce ‘the fruit of the Spirit’. **Galatians 5.22-25**. The fruit of the Spirit is the evidence of real spiritual life. Notice that we do not read of ‘fruits’, but of ‘fruit’. Different fruits come from different trees. Every virtue named in these verses is produced by the action of the One, True Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit and the believer

HOW DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT DWELL IN US?

There are two schools of thought concerning this question, one insists that the Holy Spirit literally dwells within the Christian and the other insists that the Holy Spirit doesn’t literally dwell within the Christian.

LITERAL INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

In **Acts 2:38-39** Peter said, “Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”

Acts 5:32 states, “And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him.”

It should be clear that the giver in these verses is God and the gift is the Holy Spirit. J. M. Powell one of the most informed men on Restoration History at the age of 90 in 1997 stated, “Until recent years, as far as I know, all of my preaching brethren taught that the gift of the Holy Spirit is the Spirit himself.” By contrast today many ardently believe the Holy Spirit dwells in the Christian only “through the word.”

By this they mean He dwells in us “representatively” through the Word. The Word of God and the Holy Spirit are not the same. The Holy Spirit is the third person in the Godhead. The Holy Spirit inspired certain men to write the Word. Thus, the Word is not the Holy Spirit.

The “GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT” in **Acts 2:38** was not the Word, because the people had already received and believed the Word before they were baptized, **Acts 2:41**. Before we became Christians most of us had a certain amount of the Word dwelling in us or else we would never have obeyed the Gospel.

IF I BUILD A HOUSE WITH A HAMMER AND A SAW, DOES THIS MEAN I DWELL IN THE HOUSE THROUGH THE HAMMER AND SAW?

To say water gets into a tank by means of a pipe does not mean the water never gets into the tank. Some argue that the Holy Spirit dwelling in us is a figure of speech. If so, then we must also conclude that God and Christ dwelling in us is figurative also. It would also mean that Christians dwell in Christ and his church figuratively.

DO CHRISTIANS ONLY DWELL IN THE CHURCH FIGURATIVELY?

Certainly not, we literally dwell in the church which is the body of Christ. **1 Corinthians 12:27 / Ephesians 5:30**. The way I know the Spirit dwells within me is because the Lord says He does. About a dozen times the Scriptures tell us that the Holy Spirit dwells in us. For example in **1 Corinthians 3:16** Paul writes, “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”

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

Paul told the Thessalonians, that God “has also given us His Holy Spirit” **1 Thessalonians 4:8** In **Romans 8:11** Paul writes, “But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.” In **Romans 8:9** Paul says, “But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.”

The word “you” in this phrase refers to the brethren, the children of God. The word “in” is the translation of the Greek preposition “en” and Thayer says it means “in the person.” “Dwells,” simply means to abide. The Spirit of God makes his home in us, not in temples made with hands, **Acts 17:24**. Paul tells us that our bodies are the “**temple of the Holy Spirit.**” The Greek word for “temple” is a word that means the dwelling place of deity.

It is said that Barnabas was a good man, “**full of the Holy Spirit and of faith**” **Acts 11:24** Here we have the Holy Spirit linked with faith and a man is said to be filled with both. Seven others were said to be “**full of the Spirit and of wisdom**” **Acts 6:3,5**

WHERE DID THE FAITH AND WISDOM RESIDE?

No one doubts that Luke intended for us to get the idea that faith and wisdom resided within these men. **If faith and wisdom were in these men was not the Holy Spirit in them also?**

When writers wished to convey the idea that men were filled with wrath, fear, jealousy, sorrow, joy, peace, etc. they used this very same word that is used to tell us that persons were filled with the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Holy Spirit is not a miraculous gift. His indwelling does not mean that we would have certain feelings, experiences or perform miracles.

Today God works through natural laws to bring us blessings. **Can we not believe the Spirit dwells in us in a non-miraculous way just as God and Christ dwell in us in a non-miraculous way?** It is no more miraculous than God’s hearing and answering our prayers is miraculous.

Do we mean miracles will be involved if we say to a brother or sister, “God bless you?” We can ask God to be with someone without having to think that God has to perform miracles to be with him. **Must Christ perform a miracle to strengthen us?** **Philippians 4:13.**

Paul prayed that God would strengthen Christians with might by his Spirit in the inner man, **Ephesians 3:16.**

DOES IT TAKE A MIRACLE FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT TO DO THIS?

It may be a mystery but not a miracle. To say that the Spirit dwells within us is no more miraculous than saying the Word dwells in us. We cannot even understand how the Word of God dwells in our minds any better than we can grasp how the Holy Spirit dwells in us. We do not even understand how our mind, or our soul dwells in us.

In fact we would not even know we have a soul had not God told us. The Spirit’s dwelling in the Christian is no more miraculous than God or Christ dwelling in him. Jesus told his apostles, “**If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him**” **John 14:23**

IS THIS JUST FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE OR IS IT LITERAL?

A failure to understand the Spirit’s indwelling is due in part to a tritheistic concept of God. There is one God (essence), but there are three distinct personalities in that one God, each of them called God. That one God is spirit, **John 4:24**. So there is only one self-existent eternal, omnipresent Spirit. And when that one Spirit dwells in a human body, it is correct to say that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit dwells in him.

The Bible does not separate the persons of the Godhead; it distinguishes between them, but does not separate them, except where the humanity of Jesus is involved. Jesus said he and the Father would make their abode with all who love him and keep his word, **John 14:23**. The Father and the Son, dwell in us in the same way the Holy Spirit dwells in us. They all make their abode in us.

We do not claim to know how He does this, but we believe it, because God’s Word says so. Since faith comes by hearing the Word of God, **Romans 10:17**, we believe He dwells in us by faith, not by something we feel. Think how the Godhead must feel when after repeatedly saying the Holy Spirit dwells in the Christian, some say, “**No, you really do not dwell in us at all. You just dwell in us representatively through the Word.**”

There is no power in a hammer to drive a nail unless the agent or owner uses it; there is no power in a sword to kill the enemy unless and until it is used by the soldier.

The Gospel is powerful to convict men of sin and bring them to Christ for salvation because the Holy Spirit uses it. He got the word from the Father, **1 Corinthians 2:10-13**, revealed and recorded it through the apostles and prophets,

confirmed it through miracles, and ever since Pentecost has been using it as his instrument to convert and sanctify men. It is through the Word that men are made Christians.

But none of this proves to the slightest degree that the Holy Spirit dwells in the Word or that his indwelling is through the Word only, or that two of the persons in the Godhead are in heaven and one is on earth dwelling in the Word.

WHAT DOES THE INDWELLING SPIRIT DO FOR US?

At the time one becomes a Christian the gift of the Holy Spirit serves as a seal (identification) and as an earnest (pledge or down payment) on our future inheritance in heaven. **2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5**. We can “abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit” **Romans 15:13** We can be “strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man” **Ephesians 3:16** From within our hearts (because we are sons), the spirit “helps in our weaknesses,” and makes “intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”

The result is, “all things work together for good to those who love God” **Romans 8:26-28** See also **Galatians 4:6**. The Hebrew writer admonishes, “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, (not the Word) that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” **Hebrews 4:16**

Is this not part of the intercessory work of the Holy Spirit? The “love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us” **Romans 5:5** Knowing that the Holy Spirit dwells in us motivates us to be a better person. It helps us restrain from doing things with our bodies that are wrong such as some of the works of the flesh, **Galatians 5:19-21**.

Someone once said, ‘**EXPLAIN TO ME HOW OUR ‘HUMAN SPIRIT’ DWELLS WITHIN US AND I’LL EXPLAIN TO YOU HOW THE HOLY SPIRIT DWELLS WITHIN US!**’

Let us rejoice and be thankful for the continual abiding presence of the Godhead in us. Now may “**The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all**” **2 Corinthians 13:14**

NON-LITERAL INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Jesus made a promise to the apostles that He would send the Holy Spirit, who would guide the apostles into all truth. Peter says that they didn’t write down their own words, but the very words of God, as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Further, Paul said that when people read what the apostles wrote, they would understand the apostles’ insights into the mystery of Christ.

The Scriptures further argue that they are able to make the person of God complete and equipped for every good work. **But what is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit?** The indwelling is commonly explained to be the inner promptings of the Holy Spirit. We are told that we need to listen to God speaking to us through the Holy Spirit who will help us and tell us what we should do. **Is this correct?**

The Holy Spirit dwells in the Christian.

The first thing we need to do is show that the Scriptures do speak of the Holy Spirit dwelling in the Christian. There are **6 references** to the Holy Spirit dwelling in us. **John 14:17 / Romans 8:9+11 / 1 Corinthians 3:16 / 1 Corinthians 6:19 / 2 Timothy 1:14**.

John 14:17 ‘The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.’

Romans 8:9. ‘You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.’

Romans 8:11 ‘And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.’

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

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

2 Timothy 1:14 'Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.'

What we need to do is explain what this means for the Holy Spirit to dwell in us. We might be surprised to find out that the Scriptures reveal there are many things that dwell in us.

Who else dwells in the Christian?

God the Father dwells in us.

There are 8 references to the Father dwelling in us, John 14:23 / Ephesians 2:22 / Ephesians 4:6 / 2 Corinthians 6:16 / Philippians 2:13 / Hebrews 13:21 / 1 Peter 3:15 / 1 John 4:4.

John 14:23 'Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.'

Ephesians 2:22 'And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.'

Ephesians 4:6 'One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.'

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

Philippians 2:13 'For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfil his good purpose'.

Hebrews 13:21 'Equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.'

1 Peter 3:15 'But in your hearts sanctify the Lord God.'

1 John 4:4 'You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world'.

Notice that God says that He dwells within His disciples. I haven't yet heard someone argue that God the Father personally dwells within the soul of every believer.

Not only does God dwell in us, but Christ dwells within us.

There are 7 references to Christ dwelling in us. John 14:23 / John 15:4+7 / Romans 8:10 / 2 Corinthians 13:5 / Galatians 4:19 / Ephesians 3:17 / Colossians 1:27.

John 14:23 'Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.'

John 15:4-7 'Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. 'I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.'

Romans 8:10 'If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.'

2 Corinthians 13:5 'Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realise that Christ Jesus is in you.'

Galatians 2:20 'I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.'

Ephesians 3:17 ‘So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.’

Colossians 1:27 ‘To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.’

Again, I have never heard any argument presented that Christ literally and personally dwells within the soul of every believer, telling the believer what to do. No, these arguments are reserved for the Holy Spirit. Yet, the same language is used to describe the work of the Father and the work of Christ.

Sin can dwell in us.

‘But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me’. Romans 7:17.

‘Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me’. Romans 7:20.

Paul says that sin can dwell within us. Does Paul mean that sin literally and physically dwells within the Christian, causing us to be unable to do what is right? I have never heard such an argument.

So we need to ask an important question, what does it mean for sin to dwell within us? When we answer this, we will know the answer to the Holy Spirit dwelling within us because these two concepts are in the same context in Romans.

Sin dwells in us when we allow ourselves to be controlled by the flesh. Sin rules our lives. We aren’t following God’s commands, but we are following our own ways, our own desires, and our own lusts. This is exactly how Paul explains these concepts a little bit later in Romans.

Romans 8:5-11 ‘Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.’

Notice verse 5 says what it means for sin to dwell within a person, they ‘set their minds on the things of the flesh.’ In verse 6 Paul says such a person is ‘governed by death.’ The person has his thoughts on the world. He is fleshly, worldly, and is mindful of the physical. Thus, sin dwells within the person.

What does it mean for the Father to dwell within the Christian? What does it mean for Christ to dwell within the believer? What does it mean for the Holy Spirit to dwell in the Christian? Paul explains that those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on spiritual things, Romans 8:5. Rather than be worldly and deathly minded, the person who has the Spirit of God is spiritually minded, Romans 8:6.

Please notice that verse 9 says that we are ‘in the Spirit’. Does this mean we literally dwell in the Holy Spirit? No, we are talking about a relationship and fellowship that exists between the Holy Spirit and ourselves.

Often, people use Romans 8 to show a personal and literal indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the Christian. But the context is so often neglected. Romans 7 and Romans 8 are not separate letters. Paul is drawing a contrast between the person whose mind is set on the flesh and the person whose mind is set on the spiritual. The person whose mind is on the flesh does things that are hostile toward God. Therefore, sin dwells in that person.

However, the person whose mind is set on spiritual things does things that are pleasing to God. Therefore, the Spirit dwells in that person. Paul is making a simple contrast, and isn’t teaching that the Holy Spirit lives in us and makes decisions for us. If we can understand how Christ dwells in the Christian, then we can understand how the Holy Spirit dwells in the Christian.

John 15:5-7 'I am the vine, you are the branches. The one who abides in me while I abide in him produces much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Unless a person abides in me, he is thrown away like a pruned branch and dries up. People gather such branches, throw them into a fire, and they are burned up. "If you abide in me and my words abide in you, you can ask for anything you want, and you will receive it.'

Notice that if we abide in Christ that Christ's words abide in us. This is how we dwell in Christ and Christ dwells in us. The Scriptures are speaking about a relationship that exists between ourselves and God when we let God rule our lives rather than letting sin rule our lives.

Notice these parallel statements by Paul, which explains these terms.

Ephesians 5:18+19 'And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.'

Colossians 3:16 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.'

Notice that in one instance Paul speaks of our need to 'be filled with the Spirit' and in another instance calls it letting 'the word of Christ dwell in you richly.' How is one filled with the Spirit? By letting the word of Christ dwell in each of us richly. How does the Holy Spirit dwell in us? By having the word of Christ dwell in us and rule our lives.

There is nothing mystical about what Paul is saying concerning the Holy Spirit, Christ, or the Father dwelling in us. We don't argue that Christ's presence literally resides in us, causing us to know God's will and make decisions. We don't argue that the Father's presence literally resides in us, causing us to know God's will and make decisions.

Why should we change the rules and say such things about the Holy Spirit? I believe the only reason we do so is because of the name of the Holy Spirit. The word 'spirit' or 'ghost' causes us to speak of the Holy Spirit in mystical terms. But the Holy Spirit is just as much of a person as the Father and the Son.

The Holy Spirit is deity, not an active force. The Holy Spirit can be lied to and can be grieved. The Holy Spirit is not a mystical vapour. 'Then Peter said, 'Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God.' Acts 5:3+4.

I believe that when we erase from our minds some sort of mystical nature from the Holy Spirit and consider Him in the same terms that we think of the Father and the Son, we realise that the Holy Spirit cannot physically and literally dwell within us. Terms are used to refer to the Holy Spirit just like the Father and the Son who dwell in us.

Incidentally the Bible says that 'we are in Christ' and there are 57 references which tell us this and the Bible also tells us that 'we are in the Holy Spirit', 2 times the Bible tells us this.

Conclusion

The Spirit dwells in us when we allow the word of God to rule our lives. The Spirit of God dwells in us when we submit our lives to the rule of Jesus Christ. Paul is not saying something mystical. If the Holy Spirit operates in our decisions beyond the Scriptures, then we do not need the Scriptures to know God's will.

If the Spirit tells us what to do, then the Scriptures aren't able to make us complete and fully equipped for every good work, as Paul argued in 2 Timothy 3:16-17. The Scriptures never teach the believer to listen to inward promptings of the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures don't teach the Christian to search within oneself for the answers. While this all sounds very spiritual, the Scriptures don't teach these things.

So, there we have it, two schools of thought, two differing opinions on how the Holy Spirit dwells within the Christian. Whatever conclusion we personally come too, let us remember that however He dwells within us, He is God's gift and guarantee of our eternal salvation.

Maintain the unity of the Spirit

Ephesians 4:3 'Do your best to maintain the unity of the Spirit by means of the bond of peace.' In our last study we considered the Holy Spirit and the church. When the Holy Spirit rules in a congregation, there is unity and peace.

This unity must be maintained. ‘Maintain’, ‘tereo’ and ‘watch over, keep, guard’ the ‘unity’ of the one body, the church. Notice, **not** called upon or required to **create** unity.

Spirit of adoption

Romans 8:12-17 ‘Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.’

Paul writes, ‘**Therefore brothers and sisters**’ because of the relation which we sustain to Christ, and because of the opposite effects of living fleshly and spiritual lives, we, though free from the law, are under no obligation to be lawless, and to live after the flesh.

For if you so live you must pay the penalty of such a course by dying, but if, by the exercise of your will, and the aid of the Holy Spirit, you put an end to the sinful practices of your fleshly nature, you shall live.

The testimony of Christian experience is that the aid of the Holy Spirit, though real and effectual, is not so obtrusive as to enable the one aided to take sensible notice of it. To all appearance and sensation, the victory over flesh is entirely the Christian’s own, and he recognizes the aid of the Spirit, not because his burdens are sensibly lightened, but because of the fact that in his efforts to do right he now succeeds where lately he failed.

The success, moreover, though habitual, is not invariable, for invariable victory over temptation breeds self-consciousness and self-righteousness, and other sins perhaps more dangerous than the ordinary lusts of the flesh.

‘**For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God**’. To deny the flesh is to be ‘**led by the Spirit**’, and to be led by the Spirit is to be a son of God, for, though all in the church claim this sonship, the claim is only demonstrated to be genuine in the case of those who are led by the Spirit. The Spirit leads both externally and internally.

Externally, the Spirit supplies the Gospel truth as set forth in the New Testament, and the rules and precepts therein found are for the instruction and guidance of God’s children. **Internally**, the Spirit aids by ministering strength and comfort to the disciple in his effort to conform to the revealed truth and will of God.

‘**The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’**’ That you are the sons of God is apparent, as I say, because of the Spirit which leads and frees you, and which changes your own spirit.

For, in your unsaved, unregenerate state you had a spirit of bondage, leading you to fear God, and His wrath, but when you were baptised, and became renewed, you received a different spirit, the Spirit of adoption or sonship, which dispels fear, and causes you, with confident gladness, to approach and address God as your ‘**Abba**’ which is, being interpreted, ‘**Father**’.

‘**The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory**’. In interpreting this passage we should remember that Paul is speaking to those already converted. Hence, in these and in the preceding verses, he’s not telling them how to **become** children of God, but how to **continue** such.

Now, it is true that the Spirit lays down the terms by which we may become Christians, and if we obey these terms, then both the Holy Spirit and our own spirit testify that we are ‘**children of God**’. But since Paul isn’t addressing converts, such an interpretation would be wide of his thought, which is this, if the Holy Spirit indeed leads us in a conflict with sin and a steady effort towards righteousness, and if we submit to be so led, then the Holy Spirit unites with our spirit to testify that we are God’s children.

The testimony is, of course, self-directed. i. e., the testimony is for the purpose of assuring and confirming our own faith. If we are led, we know it, and so our own spirit testifies to us. If we are led, in the godly, spiritual path, it can be none other than the Holy Spirit who leads and so, in the very act of leading, the Spirit testifies to us.

And, lastly, if we are led, and if we follow, this union of our spirit and God's Spirit in joint action proves us children of God, for our co-operation with God in this paternal government of His shows us accepted of Him as His children. But we can't be children in this one respect of government without being children also in the other respect of heirship.

We are, therefore, **God's heirs, joint-heirs with His only begotten Son**, provided that we are truly led by the Spirit as He was, which we may readily test, for the Spirit led Him through suffering to glory, and should lead us by the same pathway, if we are to enjoy somewhat of the same glory.

Sealed by the Holy Spirit

In Biblical times, a seal was a guarantee. **Ephesians 1:13+14** says regarding the Holy Spirit, **'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, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.'**

According to this passage, the seal of the Holy Spirit takes place at the point of salvation. It is a promise or guarantee of the Christian's future, eternal inheritance with Jesus Christ. The Greek word translated as 'seal' is 'shragizo' that means **'to set a seal upon, mark with a seal.'**

A seal could be used to guarantee a document or letter, **Esther 3:12**, indicates ownership, **Song of Songs 8:6**, or protect against tampering, **Matthew 27:66 / Revelation 5:1**. The Holy Spirit is our seal in every sense of this word.

1. The Holy Spirit in the believer's life helps to guarantee he or she is a child of God. **Romans 8:16** says, **'The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.'**

2. The seal of the Holy Spirit serves as a mark that we truly belong to Christ. **Romans 8:9-10** teaches, **'You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.'**

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

3. The seal of the Holy Spirit helps protect against tampering or attack. **Romans 8:13** declares, **'For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.'** In a very real sense, God's Spirit protects us and guarantees our eternity with the Lord.

At what point does the sealing of the Holy Spirit take place? It takes place when a person believes and responds to the Gospel, **Acts 2:38 / Ephesians 4:30 / 2 Corinthians 1:21+22**. At that point, God's seal offers the promise of eternal life, **John 3:16** because of salvation based on God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ. **Ephesians 2:8+9**.

The seal of the Holy Spirit offers a wonderful glimpse of God's role in salvation. When we receive salvation in Christ, we are given a guarantee, exchange our ownership for His, and are protected against forces of evil. This seal should provide wonderful encouragement for the believer against the spiritual battles in this life, **Ephesians 6:12** and anticipation for the life to come.

Contrast water baptism with Holy Spirit baptism

1. **Water baptism** is for **'all Nations'** and is required of every creature who is subject to the Gospel. **Matthew 28:19+20 / Mark 16:15+16 / Galatians 3:26-29**.

1. **Holy Spirit baptism** was poured out **once upon** the **apostles**. Jesus promised the apostles that the Spirit of Truth which the world cannot receive, **John 14:17 / Luke 24:46ff**, would **'guide them into all truth'**.

2. **Water baptism** is a **command** of God. **Matthew 28:19 / Acts 2:38 / Acts 10:48 / Acts 22:16**.

2. Holy Spirit baptism was a **promise** of God fulfilled in **Acts 2:4** and since coming into the world He is now available to indwell His people, **Acts 2:38 / Titus 3:6**. The Power was given to apostles, as the Spirit willed. **Mark 9:1 / Mark 16:17 / 1 Corinthians 12:11**.
3. Water baptism is an **act of obedience** and an act of man. **Acts 2:38 / Acts 10:48 / Acts 22:16**, and is ‘for the forgiveness of sins’.
3. Holy Spirit baptism was an **act of God**, not an act of man. **Acts 1:5 / Acts 2:4**, and was not for salvation, but given to confirm the word. **Hebrews 2:4**.
4. Water baptism is **administered by men** or by those doing the teaching. **1 Corinthians 1:14**.
4. Holy Spirit baptism was to be **given** by Jesus. **Matthew 3:11 / John 1:33 / Acts 2:4**.
5. Water baptism is a **condition of salvation**. **Mark 16:15+16 / 1 Peter 3:21 / Hebrews 9:14**.
5. Holy Spirit baptism was **not related to salvation**.
6. Water baptism is ‘**INTO the name of the Father Son and Holy Spirit**’. **Matthew 28:19 / Acts 2:38 / Acts 8:14-16 / Acts 22:16 / 1 Corinthians 6:11**.
6. Holy Spirit baptism had no formula because it wasn’t performed by man. **Matthew 3:11**.
7. Water baptism demonstrates the **believer’s** faith. **Galatians 3:26+27 / Mark 16:15+16 / Colossians 2:12**.
7. Holy Spirit baptism was not a **human act**, and did not require faith. **Matthew 3:11 / John 1:33**.
8. Water baptism represents the **death, burial and resurrection** of Christ. **Colossians 2:12 / Romans 6:1-6**.
8. Holy Spirit baptism had no such symbolism. It was the indication of the bestowal of ‘**authority**’ and the ‘**power**’ which accompanies authority. **Acts 1:5 / Acts 2:4 / Acts 2:17 / Acts 2:38**.
9. Water baptism is a **baptism of repentance** that is, it belongs to and grows out of repentance. **Mark 1:4 / Luke 13:3 / Acts 19:4 / Acts 2:38**.
9. Holy Spirit baptism came **before** the first Gospel sermon of Peter. **Mark 1:4 / Luke 7:29+30 / Acts 1:5 / Acts 2:4**.
10. Water baptism is a condition of **cleansing from sin**. **Acts 22:16 / Ephesians 5:25-27 / John 8:31+32**.
10. Holy Spirit baptism, came along **after** the apostles were clean by the word. **John 15:3**, not for cleansing but to confirm. **Hebrews 2:4**.
11. Water baptism puts one **into** Christ. **Romans 6:1-4 / Galatians 3:26+27**.
11. Holy Spirit baptism was poured out **after** the apostles were already in Christ, and had been urged to ‘**abide**’ in Him. **John 15:1-6 / Acts 2:1-4**.
12. Water baptism was in order **to receive the gift of the Spirit**. **Acts 2:38 / Acts 5:32**.
12. Holy Spirit baptism was **the one-time act** of the coming of the Spirit into the world **1 John 2:2 / 1 Timothy 2:6 / Hebrews 2:9**. Just as Jesus’ blood was shed as a one-time act but has on going benefit for all. Power was to cease when the message was confirmed. **1 Corinthians 13:1-9**.
13. Water baptism must **continue** even to the end of the age. **Matthew 28:19+20**.
13. Holy Spirit baptism was a one-time event. No two baptisms known after the Ephesian letter written. **Ephesians 4:5**.

Holy Spirit Baptism

‘And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days’. Joel 2:28+29.

‘But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel’. Acts 2:16.

Any consideration of the themes contained in the **Book of Acts** must surely include the administration of the Holy Spirit. As **Joel** prophesied, the ‘last days’ would see the ‘pouring out of the Spirit of God’. Peter, one of the twelve who received this ‘pouring out’ in **Acts 2**, confirmed that God had kept His word, the last days had arrived and the Spirit was thereby being given.

It’s notable that the apostles were never confused about the Spirit, His mission nor His medium, but confusion reigns today as every charlatan and huckster seeks to make merchandise of the Spirit of God. How fearful it is to consider the fate of those who do despite of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit was promised

Luke confided to us that Jesus told the apostles ‘Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit’. Acts 1:4+5.

We find these promises, which were made only to the apostles, recorded in **John 14:26**. ‘But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.’

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

It is a mistake of major proportions both textually and contextually, to assign these promises to all disciples. When we read carefully we will see that only the apostles were addressed. And it was only the apostles who received the fulfilment of the promise.

The Holy Spirit was given

True to their Lord’s command, the apostles were waiting in Jerusalem. Just prior to the time when the Spirit was given, a number of brethren gathered to witness the selection of **Matthias** to replace **Judas**, **Acts 1:25+26**. But it is a superficial reading that would appoint the 120 disciples or the multitudes at the place where the Spirit was given.

Please note that the last verse of chapter 1 states that **Matthias** was numbered ‘with the eleven apostles.’

Then **chapter 2:1** begins the statement, ‘And when the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place.’ Who were the ‘they’ of verse one? Was it not the ‘apostles’ who are the antecedents of the pronoun in verse one?

Further, we can pinpoint who received the Holy Spirit, because the ones who received the Spirit spoke in tongues, but **verse 7** informed us that those who spoke in tongues ‘were all Galileans,’ an obvious reference to the apostles.

Again, **verse 14** clearly stated that ‘Peter, standing up with the eleven’ began to speak and the crowd recognised that only the apostles were speaking, **Acts 2:11**, ‘as the Spirit gave them utterance’, **Acts 2:4**. But the multitude didn’t come together until after the Spirit was given, so they couldn’t have been recipients any more than the 120 were.

The Purpose of Holy Spirit Baptism

Please note that every time there was an evidence of the Spirit doing something it did not mean that a ‘baptism of the Holy Spirit was taking place.’ The baptism of the Holy Spirit was not a common event. Peter later recalled, at the time when the Spirit was poured out on the household of **Cornelius**, that it reminded him of what was given to the apostles ‘at the beginning’, **Acts 11:15**.

Between **Acts 2** and **Acts 10**, there is much evidence of spiritual activity, but not of Holy Spirit baptism.

All the saved, **Acts 2:41**, received the Spirit, **Acts 2:38**, but it was **not** Holy Spirit baptism. Likewise, God gave the Spirit to all who obeyed him, **Acts 5:32**. The Spirit shook the place where the brethren had gathered to rejoice at the release of Peter and John, **Acts 4:31**, but it was **not** Holy Spirit baptism. **Were the apostles baptised in the Spirit more than once?**

The seven men who served the church, in **Acts 6** were ‘**full of the Spirit**’ **Acts 6:3**, but we know that they were **not** baptised in the Holy Spirit. **How do we know?**

Because **Philip** was one of these who had the Spirit and could work miracles, yet when he preached to the Samaritans in **Acts 8:5-24**, he **couldn't** lay hands on the converts and give them the Holy Spirit. This wasn't a problem for the apostles Peter and John who came to Samaria later and imparted the Spirit to the Christians.

Simon, being observant, wanted to buy the power which the apostles had, for ‘**when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Spirit**’. **Acts 8:18+19**.

Simon didn't try to buy the gift from Philip, who, though ‘**full of the Spirit**’ couldn't lay hands on others and impart the Spirit. He **saw** that the apostles had what others didn't have. It's clear that God gave **the apostles** the baptism of the Holy Spirit to empower **them** for their work as ambassadors of Christ and as those who would be able to unfold the ‘**mystery**’, **Ephesians 3:1-5** of the Gospel.

The apostles occupied a unique role in this work and were enabled by the Spirit to complete the task. But by the time the epistle to the **Ephesians** was written, Paul stated that there was only ‘**one baptism**’, **Ephesians 4:5** and it was water baptism, **not** Holy Spirit baptism. Holy Spirit baptism wasn't for all men and not for all time.

Cornelius and the Holy Spirit

1. But didn't Cornelius also receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

First of all, it isn't stated that he was baptised in the Spirit, but that the Spirit ‘**fell on them**’, **Acts 10:44 / Acts 11:15**.

I have little doubt that it was **similar** to what the apostles received, but for a **different purpose**. Cornelius wasn't called to be an apostle, **Acts 1:21+22**. But he was a Gentile and this presented special problems to the church, completely Jewish until this time.

God used Cornelius in a special manner to prove in unmistakable fashion, **by giving the Holy Spirit to Gentiles**, that to ‘**Gentiles also has God granted repentance unto life**’, **Acts 11:18**. Peter understood this, for as a Jew and reluctant to associate with Gentiles, he concluded ‘**who was I that I could withstand God?**’ **Acts 11:37**.

What happened to Cornelius reminded Peter of what had happened to **the apostles** ‘**at the beginning**’, **Acts 11:15**. It also reminded him of the promise of Jesus to baptise **the apostles** in the Spirit, **Acts 11:16**. Cornelius was a special case.

He wasn't called to be an apostle but God used him as proof that Gentiles could enter the kingdom along with Jews. We shouldn't make more of Cornelius and the Holy Spirit than the Scriptures do.

What was their spiritual state, when the Holy Spirit ‘fell on all those who heard the word’? To reach an understanding of the events in the house of Cornelius there are several points that need to be considered.

We must recognize that when ‘**the Spirit came upon them**’, Cornelius and his friends hadn't yet become Christians and were therefore not yet saved, because they hadn't yet been told **how** to be saved!

We understand this because **Acts 10:44** tells us that the Holy Spirit fell on the Gentile listeners, ‘**while Peter was still speaking**’. This was made even clearer when Peter went to Jerusalem and was required to explain his visit to a Gentile home. Peter said, ‘**As I began to speak the Holy Spirit fell upon them, Acts 11:15**’.

Only later, after they had heard the Gospel, did he instruct them to ‘**be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ**’, **Acts 10:48**.

Now, we remember that, on the Day of Pentecost, the same Peter had said to the Jews who believed his message, ‘**repent and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of**

the Holy Spirit'. Acts 2:38. Shortly after this, he informed the Jewish Council that God gives the Holy Spirit 'to those who obey Him.' Acts 5:32.

Therefore, until these Gentiles had heard and understood the message which Peter had been sent to bring them, and had been baptised in the name of Jesus.

a. Their sins were **not** forgiven and they were **not** saved, and,

b. They did **not** receive that 'gift of the Holy Spirit', which was promised in Acts 2:38.

2. This raises the next question. When the Holy Spirit enabled these Gentiles to speak in tongues, what purpose did this serve? Or, in other words, why did the Spirit come upon these unsaved Gentiles?

The short answer is, it happened just because they were Gentiles! Nothing like this ever happened, either before or after this event, to any other group of converts that we read about in the New Testament!

As a Jew, Peter was well aware that Fellow-Jews would consider him guilty of a grievous offence when they heard that he had entered the house of a Gentile. And they certainly did, as Acts 11:2+3 reveals! Therefore, when he set out to go to Caesarea, he was careful to take the precautionary step of inviting six Jewish Christians to go along with him to witness whatever might occur. Acts 11:12.

The vision he had received at Joppa had taught Peter himself that the Good News is for everyone, even Gentiles, but Jewish Christians generally had still to learn this lesson. They had to learn that even Gentiles were invited to hear and obey the Gospel.

The six Jewish believers who, probably very reluctantly, had entered the house of Cornelius with Peter, were taught that lesson very vividly when the Holy Spirit enabled the Gentiles to speak in other languages, and it was to his companions that Peter's question in Acts 10:47 was addressed. It was, in effect, a challenge, 'does any one of you now dare to refuse to baptise these people?'

They raised no objection, because there could hardly have been a more vivid and convincing expression of God's approval of Peter's action, than the dramatic intervention of the Holy Spirit when he began to speak to his Gentile audience.

Indeed, his Jewish companions were 'astonished'! verse 45, and Acts 10:15 and Acts 11:18 prove that both they and the apostles and brethren in Jerusalem, were quick to recognise the significance of what had happened and had the grace and wisdom to acknowledge that this was God at work.

3. Was this another instance of the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

I recall, a few years ago, being taught that the baptism of the Holy Spirit occurred twice during the New Testament period, once in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost when the first Jews obeyed the Gospel, and once at Caesarea when the first Gentiles became Christians.

That explanation was both simple and satisfactory because it dealt very effectively with many of the arguments made by so-called 'Pentecostal' and 'Charismatic' groups, who still continue to claim to be baptised in the Holy Spirit.

But I don't now believe that this explains what happened in the house of Cornelius. I don't think that this was a second occurrence of baptism of the Holy Spirit. Just consider. We must ask ourselves the question, to whom was the baptism of the Holy Spirit promised and why was it promised?

1. It was personally promised by the Lord to His apostles and never promised to anyone else. John 16:7.

2. Those to whom it was promised were instructed to wait to receive it. Acts 1:4+5.

3. When they received the baptism, it would guide them into all truth, they would receive new revelations, and they would be granted total recall of all that they had been taught by the Lord. John 14:26 / John 16:13+14.

4. Their baptism in the Spirit would endow them with power and bestow on them the authority to become His witnesses. Acts 1:8+9.

On the Day of Pentecost, the Lord's promise was fulfilled. Acts 2:33. The Holy Spirit fell on the apostles, not on the listening Jews, nor on the 3000 who obeyed the Gospel. But, in contrast, in the house of Cornelius the Spirit fell upon the listening Gentiles.

The two events are obviously quite different, and the only point of similarity is the fact on the Day of Pentecost, in the house of Cornelius the Holy Spirit signalled His presence and approval by enabling these seeking Gentiles to speak in languages they had not learned, and.

1. They received the forgiveness of their sins, Acts 2:38 and,
2. They received the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, God's own gift to those who obey Him. Acts 5:32.

Confirmation of the Word

Jesus had promised the apostles that 'signs shall accompany them that believe: in my name shall they cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall in no wise hurt them, they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover'. Mark 16:17+18.

This is equal to what the Hebrew writer stated, 'For if the word, which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard; God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will'. Hebrews 2:2-4.

All these things happened as God bore witness to early disciples so that the word of God was confirmed. There were nine gifts of the Spirit, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 and many disciples had them by 'the laying on of the apostle's hands', Acts 8:17-19. But we should be reminded that such gifts were 'according to his own will', Hebrews 2:4 and not according to what men wanted.

God's will was, that during the time of 'the oral revelation', as well as during the writing of that 'oral message', confirmation of truth was clear so that false doctrine could be discerned. However, once the full message was delivered, John 16:13 / Jude 3 / 2 Timothy 3:16+17 / Galatians 1:6-9, the spiritual gifts were no longer needed and were removed by God. 1 Corinthians 13:8-12.

During the infancy of the church, special gifts were needed to supply truth. Once full truth was delivered, the church 'grew up', 1 Corinthians 13:11 and 'put away childish things'. The age of miracles, of spiritual gifts, is over. Just one example should show the work of the Spirit during the formative period of the church.

Acts 15 recorded the great debate over admission of Gentiles into fellowship. When the apostles and elders at Jerusalem gathered, Barnabas and Paul 'rehearsed what signs and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles through them', Acts 15:12.

The letter that was sent to the churches testifying of the events at Jerusalem included that 'it seemed good to the Holy Spirit.' Acts 15:28. The Holy Spirit was at work in the world, bringing in the full Gospel message and confirming it. Acts 19:1-7.

Laying on of hands

If Acts 2 is the only instance of Holy Spirit baptism in the New Testament, how then do we account for the fact that many others in the New Testament performed miracles or spoke in tongues? If they were not recipients of Holy Spirit baptism, how did they get the ability?

The New Testament dictates only one other way to receive miraculous capability, through 'the laying on of the apostles' hands'. Only the apostles possessed the ability to transfer miraculous capability to others. Acts 8:17-21.

This description establishes two important facts.

1. Only the apostles had the ability to impart to others the ability to perform miracles, and

2. Those other than the apostles who could perform miracles received their ability **indirectly** through **the apostles**, not **directly from God via Holy Spirit baptism**.

This fascinating feature of the existence of the miraculous in the first century makes it possible to understand how other individuals received their supernatural powers. For example, **Philip**, who was **not** an apostle, possessed the ability to perform miracles, **Acts 8:6+13**.

If he **wasn't** an apostle, and he **didn't** receive direct ability from God via baptism of the Holy Spirit, **where, then, did he derive his ability?** **Luke** informs us that **Philip** previously received the laying on of the apostles' hands, **Acts 6:5+6**.

Likewise, the first Christians in Ephesus were enabled to speak in tongues when the apostle Paul laid his hands on them, **Acts 19:6**. Even Timothy received his gift from the laying on of Paul's hands, **2 Timothy 1:6**.

Some have challenged the exclusivity of the role of the apostles in their unique ability to impart the miraculous element by calling attention to the admonition given by Paul to Timothy, **'Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you.'** **1 Timothy 4:14**.

Even though Paul plainly declared that the **'gift of God'** which Timothy possessed was conferred **'through the laying on of my hands,'** **2 Timothy 1:6**, **how does one explain the fact that Paul also stated that Timothy's gift came through the elders, i.e., the eldership, as well?**

Once again, the grammar of the text provides the answer. In **2 Timothy 1:6**, where Paul claimed sole credit for imparting the gift to Timothy, he employed the Greek preposition **'dia'** with the genitive, which means **'through'** or **'by means of'**.

However, in **1 Timothy 4:14**, where Paul included the eldership in the action of impartation, he employed a completely different Greek preposition, **'meta'**. The root meaning of **'meta'** is **'in the midst of'**. It denotes the **'attendant circumstances'** of something that takes place, the **'accompanying'** phenomena.

It means **'in association with'** or **'accompanied by'**. In other words, Paul as an apostle imparted the miraculous gift to Timothy. It came from God through Paul.

However, on that occasion, the local eldership of the church were present and participated with Paul in the event, lending their simultaneous support and accompanying commendation. Consequently, **1 Timothy 4:14** provides no proof that miraculous capability could be received through other means in addition to apostolic imposition of hands and the one other clear instance of Holy Spirit baptism.

The purpose of miracles

What was the purpose of miracles in the ministry of Christ, or in the apostolic age? Their design must be consistent with the lofty theme of redemption.

Of the early disciples who were endowed with spiritual gifts, **Mark** declares, **'And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed.'** **Mark 16:20**. The function of the **'signs'** was to **'confirm'** the revelatory process, i.e., the word of truth being communicated from God to man.

The writer of **Hebrews** argues similarly. He declares that the message regarding the **'great salvation,'** which at the first had been spoken through the Lord, was **confirmed** unto us by them that heard, God also bearing witness with them, both by **signs** and **wonders**, and by **various miracles**, and by **gifts of the Holy Spirit**, according to his own will **Hebrews 2:3+4**.

Of special interest in these passages is the term **'confirm,'** **'bebaioo'**. The word denotes evidence that establishes the validity of the divinely-given word. The supernatural gifts of the primitive age, therefore, had as their design the establishment of the credibility of Christ and His spokesmen, and so ultimately, the validation of their message, namely, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Saviour of the world!

Now observe this very important point. If it can be established that those early miracles do corroborate the testimony of Christ, and those commissioned by Him, and further, that the recording of these events in the New Testament was designed to perpetually accomplish that function, then it stands as demonstrated that the repetition of such signs is **not** needed today.

The fact is, that is exactly what is affirmed by the apostle John. He declares that the ‘**signs**’ of Christ, which he records in his Gospel account, ‘**are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.**’ **John 20:31.**

Even those who claim that God is working miracles today, when asked if they believe that the recorded miracles of Christ in the New Testament are sufficient to establish faith in Him, will answer affirmatively. It ought to be abundantly clear, therefore, that since the miracles of the Bible continue to accomplish their original purpose, there is no need for a repetition of them today. They are not being replicated in this age!

Spiritual gifts Intellectual gifts

Gifts that have to do with ‘**intellectual powers**’.

a. **Knowledge.**

b. **Wisdom.**

a. **Knowledge.**

Knowledge, ‘**gnosis**’ is a knowing, knowledge. This gift is distinguished from the ‘**word of wisdom**’ in that information, ‘**knowledge**’ is in contrast with judgment and practicality of knowledge. The one with this gift had knowledge and the one with wisdom made application of that knowledge.

b. **Wisdom.**

Wisdom, ‘**sophia**’ is sound judgment, intelligence, practical wisdom. Individuals were given the gift of wisdom, **and all other gifts**, by being ‘**moved ‘tell or announce’ by the Holy Spirit**’, **2 Peter 1:21**. The Holy Spirit simply told these people what to say and do.

Thaumaturgic gifts

Gifts involving ‘**miraculous powers**’. ‘**Thauma**’ meaning ‘**wonder**’, thus, acts which produce wonder.

a. **Powerful faith.**

b. **The gift of healing.**

c. **The Working of miracles.**

a. **Powerful faith.**

This would **not** be the faith of **Romans 5:1**. This is a miraculous faith that enabled one to ‘**remove mountains**’, **1 Corinthians 13:2 / Matthew 17:20 / James 5:14+15**.

b. **The gift of healing.**

I want us to consider **the gift of healing** and the claims of those who profess to exercise this gift today.

1. I would like you to think about the **confusion**, which we find in the religious world, on the subject of **healing**.

2. Then, I want you to think about the **unscriptural, false and misleading claims** that are often made by so-called ‘**faith healers**’ today.

3. Then we shall see what the true **gift of healing** meant in New Testament times.

4. Finally, **how** the gift was **received** and **how long** it was meant to **last**. Let us clearly understand what we are talking about.

We are talking about **healing**, not from the medical standpoint, but from the religious standpoint.

The religious world uses different names. It is sometimes called **divine** healing, or **spiritual** healing or **faith** healing. In fact, **none** of these descriptions is really accurate.

a. For instance, to call it **divine healing** is much too vague and too loose a description because examples of ‘**divine healing**’, that is, example of people being healed by God, can be found in the Scriptures centuries before spiritual gifts were bestowed. Elijah and Elisha and others healed people miraculously.

b. And to call it **spiritual** healing misses the point, because the ailments which the **gift of healing** dealt with were unmistakably physical, not spiritual.

c. And as for **faith healing**. When so-called ‘**faith-healers**’, fail to heal the sick people who come to them, they always claim that the failure occurs because the faith of the sick person is not strong enough, or that they lack faith altogether. But the **gift of healing** had nothing whatsoever to do with ‘**faith**’ healing. Healing was bestowed whether faith was present or not.

So what precisely are we looking at?

We are **not** asking if God **can** heal because we know He can. We are **not** asking if God **does** heal because we know He **does**.

We are **not** asking if God heals in answer to prayer, because we know that **James 5:15** tell us to pray for the sick. We are **not** discussing healing in response to **faith** which is, in fact, very closely related to healing in response to **prayer**.

What we are asking today is, **are there people who possess the gift of healing, which was bestowed by the Holy Spirit in New Testament times?** This is something I would like you to think about. **Do today’s so-called ‘faith healers’ possess and demonstrate the gift of the Spirit, the gift of healing?**

You know, it is positively amazing how many confuse the **gift of healing** with **faith healing**, when the two are very different indeed. For example, I have a report concerning a healing campaign, which featured a man named **Theo Jones**.

At one of his meetings, well! Let the report speak for itself. ‘**There was a totally blind woman led in by her husband. You are not believing, sister,**’ **Jones** warned her. ‘**Your faith is weak**’, the blind woman was hustled off the platform immediately. Now, I imagine you **know** what that **really** meant!

Faced with a **real** physical problem and not some psychosomatic, or neurological, or undiagnosed, or unproven ailment, **Mr. Jones** was absolutely ‘**powerless**’, and therefore tried to cover his impotence by brazenly accusing the poor woman of not having sufficient faith. The element that was lacking in that case was **not** faith, **but** power. **The man had no power.**

Note in **James 5:14+15** and **Matthew 17:14-20**, it’s about the person doing the miraculous healing and not the person needing healed.

If we turn to **Acts 5:12-16**, we **see** the miraculous power in action. Many wonders and signs were done among the people by the hands of the apostles. They carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on bed and pallets, so that, as Peter came by, his shadow might fall on some of them.

Furthermore, people of the area around Jerusalem, ‘**brought the sick, those afflicted with unclean were ALL healed**’.

If we look at **Acts 19:11+12**, we see that the same thing happened in Paul’s ministry. God did **extraordinary miracles** by the hands of Paul, so that handkerchiefs and aprons were carried from him to the sick and the diseases left them.

You see that when a person possessed the ‘**gift of healing**’ it didn’t matter if the patient had **great** faith, or **faith**, or **little** faith or **no** faith at all! But the **power** which the Spirit of God had granted.

I repeat that, what produced the ‘**healing**’ was ‘**gift possessed by the healer**’, and it didn’t depend on the faith of the sufferer. This is why we say that ‘**faith**’ healing and the ‘**gift**’ of healing are very different matters. Needless to say, when people are suffering severe illness they are understandably willing to try anything in order to obtain a cure.

And the trust and confidence they demonstrate in so-called ‘faith healers’, who mercilessly take advantage of them, are really pathetic.

Putting it bluntly, most of what passes as ‘faith healing’, in modern ‘faith healing campaigns’ is fraudulent and false. Some of the people who conduct the campaigns may be sincerely mistaken in their belief but the vast majority of faith-healing cases have proved to be frauds.

People who are prepared even to lie in order to create a reputation for themselves. And, at the same time to make money for them under the guise of running non-profit making organisations, whose assets run in millions of pounds. My friend has in his possession, a letter sent by an organisation calling itself ‘the Osborn foundation’, of Tulsa Oklahoma.

It enclosed a piece of burlap, cloth, which, the letter said, had been ‘prayed over’ for seven days, by Osborne and his wife, and on receipt of ‘seed money’ they would spend more time in prayer, for whatever was asked for by whoever sent the ‘seed money’ to them.

To crown this fraud, the Osborne’s had the audacity to claim that they had sent the letter under the impulse of the Holy Spirit.

Do you think that this man and his wife are exceptions? Nothing of the kind! Some time ago a friend of mine cut an article out of a magazine called ‘Coronet. It reported that such men as Jack Coe, Asa A. Allen, and the even better known Oral Roberts have all built up vast personal fortunes out of their so-called ‘healing’ campaigns.

I recall that a few years ago, Roberts hit the news headlines because he announced to the world that, if he did not receive the money that he needed for one of his projects that he was building by a certain date, ‘The Oral Roberts University’, the Lord would take him’.

Another fraud, Orval Jagers opened a brief case on a plane, and a stewardess caught sight of bundles of dollar notes. Thinking that they might have something to do with a bank-robbery which had recently taken place, the pilot, radioed ahead, and the police were waiting for Mr. Jagers when he stepped off the plane. It took him two hours to convince the police that the 70,000 dollars in the briefcase were what he had taken in from his latest campaign.

Similarly, A. A. Allen, the magazine reported was driving home from a ‘healing campaign’, with money in the boot of his car, when he was stopped by the Police and arrested for drunken driving. He had to deposit \$1000 in bail, which, I might add, he forfeited because he did not turn up at court.

He was excommunicated by the Pentecostal church of which he was a member, and his private secretary signed a sworn statement, which declared that not one of Allen’s alleged cures could be verified, despite his claims that people had been instantly healed.

Let me also mention at this point, that in the ‘faith-healing’ business, most of these men began in the so-called Pentecostal church, and today most of the religious bodies which hold such campaigns have originated, either directly or indirectly from that religious body. The men whom I have named, Coe, Jagers, Allen and Roberts, ALL began in the Pentecostal movement and were either disfellowshipped, or left to start their own organisations.

Oral Roberts, who began in Oklahoma City with \$30 and went on to make a fortune of millions, decided to move up into a higher social class and joined the Methodist church. The Methodist Church in the U.S.A. seemingly attracts people of a higher social class than in this country.

At least 60 of these ‘faith-healers’ have set up their own organisations, and some have made extremely grandiose claims for themselves. One black ‘healer’ from Detroit, gave him the title, ‘the Rev. Dr. James F. Hones. DD., Universal dominion ruler, internationally known as Prophet Jones’.

I believe that I could keep you entertained all day, telling you about these frauds, confidence tricksters, who can still be heard on American Radio and T.V. Here is a final example which would be hilarious, if it were not so tragic. My friend took it from an ‘associated press report’. From Washington DC, August 4th 1951. It concerned a meeting in Fairmont Heights, Maryland. And I quote.

‘A coffin was lowered into a grave, after a tent-meeting revivalist told his audience that the doomed man would be raised from the dead.’ As the earth was shovelled onto the coffin, someone saw the corpse crawl out of a tunnel just outside the tent. The corpse escaped during the ensuing riot’.

Some years ago, the **British medical association**, which, as you know, is the highest medical authority in the land, conducted a **two-year long** study of all kinds of **healing**, at the request of the **Archbishops of Canterbury and York**.

A special committee of eminent medical men was set up to conduct the investigation, and their report was published in a special report, during their **Annual Conference**. This is that report which was cut out of the British Medical Journal.

1. It states that **3 prominent RC doctors** were invited to be on the committee, but they declined. Probably because they knew that they would be expected to investigate the alleged miracles, which are reported from **Lourdes**.
2. Most of the ‘**cures**’ of organic diseases **claimed**, are explained in the view of the Committee, by mistaken diagnosis, or prognosis, alleviation or remission, spontaneous cure, or combined treatment. Some cases, which were said to be **epilepsy**, appeared to be cases of **hysteria**.
3. As for the ‘**miracles**’ of **Lourdes**. An authority in **Lourdes**, known as the ‘**Bureau Des Constatations**’ investigates cases of so-called ‘**miracles**’, in order to exclude psychogenic and hysterical conditions and here follows a quotation from the Bureau.

‘In spite of the immense pressure of popular enthusiasm, the number of miracles actually attested and registered over the years, has been exceedingly small (**not even one a year**), and every attempt is made to emphasize the spiritual value of the pilgrimage, rather than such healings as may be claimed’. There is much more in this report, as you see, but here is the conclusion.

‘As far, then, as our observation and investigation have gone, we have seen **no evidence** that there is any special type of illness cured solely by spiritual healing, which cannot be cured by medical methods which do not involve such claims’.

The report continues, ‘The cases claimed as cures of a miraculous nature present **no feature** of a unique and unexpected character outside the knowledge of any experience physician or psychologist.’ And the last word, ‘The Committee finds **no evidence** that there is any type of illness cured by spiritual healing **ALONE**, which could not have been cured by medical treatment, which necessarily includes consideration of environmental factors’.

c. The working of miracles.

This individual ‘**produced,**’ ‘**miracles,**’ ‘**dunamis.**’ ‘**Dunamis**’ is power, might, strength, then, generally strength, or power, ability to do a thing. In **Matthew 22:29**, the Word of God said, ‘**You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God.**’

The word translated ‘**power**’ is the same, translated ‘**miracles**’ in **1 Corinthians 12:10**. Jesus tells us that these powers include healing the sick of diseases, **Mark 6:5 / Luke 9:1**, inspired teaching, **Luke 1:17**, removal of unclean spirits, **Luke 4:36**, raising the dead, **John 11** and so forth.

Spoken gifts

Gifts which had to do with the spoken word.

- a. **Preaching and Teaching, Prophecy, ‘pro fetes,’** to speak forth.
- b. **The ability to distinguish between spirits.** Possibly relating to exorcism.
- c. **The ability to speak in other languages.** Languages which had not been learned. **Acts 2:1-11.**
- d. **The ability to interpret the languages used.** **1 Corinthians 12:10.**

I think we also saw that, at that time and in those circumstances, these were **not** merely extravagant demonstrations of miraculous power, but **gifts which were eminently practical**, the purpose being to edify, build up the entire church. **1 Corinthians 14:12.**

Since that was the Spirit's purpose in bestowing the gifts, it wasn't necessary that every member of the church should possess them, nor were members regarded as second-class Christians if they **didn't** possess gifts. The closing verses of **1 Corinthians 12:29+30** proves this, **'Do all speak with tongues? Do all possess the gift of healing? Do all interpret?'** The implied answer to these questions is **no!**

a. Prophecy.

'Prophecy', **'propheteia'** is the gift of interpreting the will of the gods, in New Testament, the gift of expounding Scripture, of speaking and preaching. A **'propheteuo'** is one who speaks and preaches under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Later Paul will reveal the importance of prophecy over tongues. **1 Corinthians 14:5.**

Gifts of prophecy, including the ability to foretell future events, were the endowment of certain Christians in the **apostolic age** and there would appear to have been **two orders** of these, the higher including those mentioned under **1 Corinthians 12:8**, and others whose ability concerned the prediction of events such as those prophesied by **Agabus Acts 11:28 / Acts 21:11**. But not always **'prediction,'** but elevated and inspired discourse, the power of preaching to edification. **1 Corinthians 14:12.**

What does 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22 mean, when it says, 'Do not despise prophesying'? 'Do not quench the Spirit. Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil.' **1 Thessalonians 5:19-22.**

When one encounters a problem passage, it is important to consider the context. In practice, this means looking at the verses which go before, and those, which follow. That is always sound advice, and it is advice worth following as we consider the question before us.

The previous verse, **verse 19** says, **'do not quench the Spirit.'** Now, the Spirit referred to be unquestionably the Holy Spirit. Notice that in this verse the **present imperative** tense is used, which means that we have here a statement which relates to something which the believers in Thessalonica had evidently been doing and were continuing to do up to that moment.

An **'imperative'** is a command or an instruction, so the sense of this verse is literally, **'Do not continue to quench the Spirit'**. This tells us that the Thessalonians were giving offence to the Holy Spirit. They were disregarding and perhaps even repressing, a particular manifestation of the Spirit.

We see from the **next verse** that the specific gift involved was the gift of **prophecy**, because the word which is translated **'prophesying's'**, **'propheteia'**, occurs on only two other occasions, **1 Corinthians 14:6+22**, where Paul discusses the exercise of spiritual gifts.

The church at Thessalonica therefore is told, in effect, **'Do not continue what you have been doing, quenching, or suppressing, this manifestation of the Spirit'**. Certainly, at the very least, they were discouraging the exercise of the prophetic gift.

The apostolic command in **verse 19** is followed by the verse, at which we are now looking, **verse 20**, **'And do not despise prophesying'**. Here, again, this is a **present imperative**, and it means, **'Do not continue to despise prophesying'**. You will notice that there is a significant difference between the **Authorized Version** and many modern versions in the way in which **verses 19+20** are rendered.

In the **A.V.**, we find two short sentences, **'Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesying's.'** But in modern versions, **the Revised Standard Version for example**, the two verses are separated only by a comma, so that they read as one sentence, **'Do not quench the Spirit, do not despise prophesying.'** The implication is that, to despise **'prophesying'** was to quench the Spirit.

Clearly, then, Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Spirit, regarded the exercise of that particular gift, **the gift of prophecy**, as of very real importance to the spiritual growth and wellbeing of the infant church in Thessalonica.

Now, this letter was written during the **second missionary journey**, and is, therefore reliably regarded as one of the earliest of the apostolic letters, it was written from **Corinth**, where Paul arrived about **50 AD**, after leaving

Thessalonica, and where he stayed for **18 months**. **Acts 18:11**. We arrive at this date because we know that the proconsul **Gallio**, which is mentioned in the **next verse, verse 12**, took up his position in Corinth about that time.

The letter was probably written about **51 or 52 AD**. It is even likely, although not stated, that it was Paul himself who imparted spiritual gifts to the Thessalonian church as he had at Corinth during the year and a half he remained in that city.

On the matter of spiritual gifts in the infant church we learn that Paul informed the Ephesian believers that prophets were among the Lord's gifts to the church. **Ephesians 4:11**. Earlier in the same letter he had stated that apostles and prophets had laid the foundation on which the church is build, that foundation being Christ Himself, **Ephesians 2:20**.

He followed this, in **Ephesians 3:5**, with the assertion that the Spirit used apostles and prophets as instruments for the revelation of truth.

Although we don't believe that there are such inspired men alive today, it shouldn't be difficult for anyone to understand that in those days, apostles and prophets fulfilled an essential role in the revelation of the truth and the establishment of the church.

Bear in mind that the New Testament had not then been compiled. Indeed, as I have already implied, many of the books, which comprise our present New Testament, had not even been written. Therefore, instead of being able to study written instruction and teaching, we find that prophecy, **'oral,'** that is spoken instruction, was the means by which the early Christians were taught.

Bear in mind, also, that the word **'prophesying'** doesn't mean that a **new revelation** was presented every time the prophet opened his mouth! The word **'profetes'** means **'to speak forth'**, and covers preaching and teaching generally. And, if you examine the Old Testament books, you will find that many of the writers never fore-told future events, but simply delivered a message on God's behalf.

In fact, in the Old Testament, **'a prophet'**.

1. Delivered a message from God.
2. Interpreted current events, he explained what was happening at that moment. **And very often, the explanation the prophet gave, was very different from what the people thought!**
3. And sometimes was able to tell the people what God was going to do.

In the New Testament, the exercise of **the gift of prophecy** simply meant that men were led by the Holy Spirit to speak in order that the church might be strengthened and built up.

Now it is clear from **1 Thessalonians 5:20**, that some of the Thessalonian Christians had been inclined to undervalue this particular gift, because the word **'despise'** means **'set at nought'**. So Paul is urging them, not to **'set at nought'** these Spirit-led teachers, or the messages they delivered.

However, he also issues this warning, **'Test everything'**. In other words, **'Be on your guard, and hold fast what is good'**, **1 Thessalonians 5:21**. I stress again, that this instruction, to pay attention to the prophets, was valid as long as the spiritual gifts, which included apostles and prophets, remained. But when they were removed, the specific sense of these words ceased to apply.

Yet there is a sense in which they contain a message for us today. **'Prophesying'** means **'speaking forth'**. And prophecy, in the general sense of the word, is that which is preached. It is preaching and teaching. There is no one today who possesses **'the gift of prophecy'**, about which Paul writes. Be on your guard, and do not trust those who claim to predict future events.

Remember that almost **2000 years ago**, Paul said that prophecies would fail, the word means **'cease'**. The gift of tongues, which was the ability of people to speak in languages they had not learned, would cease, and the gift of miraculous knowledge would end. **1 Corinthians 13:8-10**.

We have no inspired, Spirit-led messengers, no apostles and prophets such as those who served the infant church. But we do have those who preach and teach that which the Holy Spirit has preserved for us and presented to us in the Word.

We have inherited the rich blessing of **'all things that pertain to life and godliness'**, in the New Testament Scriptures. We have the recorded words of **'holy men of God who were moved by the Holy Spirit.'** **2 Peter 1:3 / 2 Peter 1:21**. It is as imperative today as it ever was, that we who love the Lord should not under value, despise the preaching and teaching of the Word of God.

We should never forget that the Lord Himself told His apostles. **'He who listens to you, listens to me; he who rejects you, rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects Him who sent me'**. **Luke 10:16**. I wonder how anyone can claim to accept the authority of Christ, whilst rejecting the writings of the apostles whom He authorized to speak on His behalf.

And so as a quick recap, we need to remember to keep this in the context of its date, when the writer is writing they were **still** in the age of miraculous revelations from God. We know **miracles, wonders** and **signs** had a purpose and was to **confirm** the preached Word, **Mark 16:20 / Hebrews 2:4**.

We also know what these **miracles, signs** and **wonders** were given for the common good, **1 Corinthians 12:7-11** and finally we also know when the miraculous would cease, **1 Corinthians 13:8-13 / Ephesians 4:7-16**.

It was the Holy Spirit who was the one who empowered those who prophesied for the purpose of giving **God's revelation to men** and so to despise prophecies, would be to quench the work of the Holy Spirit, and so remove one's self from the life giving revelation of God. **Ephesians 4:30**.

Today, if we turn our back on the result of the Spirit's work, **'the word of God'**, we can, in a sense, quench the Spirit. God's Word was made known through His Holy Spirit, **John 16:13**, in Old Testament times, God did this through prophets, **1 Peter 1:10+11 / 2 Peter 1:20+21** and in New Testament times, God did this through the apostles and prophets of Jesus Christ. **John 16:13 / John 14:26**.

Throughout history mankind has always had problems accepting God's Word, even God's own people Israel struggled with this, **Hosea 4:1**. **Romans 1:18-23** reminds us that even the Gentiles had problems accepting God's Word.

And so what the writer is telling the Thessalonian church is, don't refuse to listen and obey what the Holy Spirit was making known to them through revelations at that time. He's reminding them not to despise prophecies, in other words don't belittle the prophecies which were being made through the prophets, don't refuse to accept what God was revealing through them.

But and this is important, they cannot simply just accept any **'new'** revelation, they have to **test** them, and the reason they had to test them was because they had to recognise that **not every claim** to be from God was true. John reminds us in **1 John 4:1** that were are **'not to believe every spirit, but test the spirits.'** **Why?** Because **'many false prophets have come into the world'**.

And so today especially within the charismatic churches, we need to test what people say when they claim they have a **'new'** revelation from God, or God is still performing miraculous, signs and wonders through them. Today we need to be like the **Bereans** in **Acts 17:11**, they received the word with great readiness but they also searched the Scriptures daily to find out for themselves as to whether what Paul was teaching was true or not.

We should accept everything which is in harmony with the Scriptures and it's teaching, and reject everything which is not. **1 John 4:6 / Acts 2:42**. We are hold on to everything that is good and reject everything which is evil. **Amos 5:15 / Psalm 97:10 / Romans 12:9**.

That word **'reject'** is sometimes rendered **'abstain'**, the Greek word for **'abstain'** is the word, **'apechomai'** and it literally means to run in the opposite direction. **Are we actively running away from evil or running towards it?**

b. The ability to distinguish between spirits.

1 Corinthians 12:10 ‘the discerning of Spirits’. We must remember to try to understand these gifts in the context of the historical period during which they were exercised. This verse, which seem so strange to us, would be perfectly understood by the people alive at the time of the writing of Paul’s letter.

For example, his readers would understand that, when he writes in **1 Corinthians 14:37** about those whom he describes as ‘**spiritual**’, he was referring to those who were believed to be possessed by a spirit, because this was the name by which such people were known.

Also, Christians weren’t the only ones who believed in ‘**spirit- possession**’ i.e. individuals who were regarded as being under the influence of spirits which used them as their ‘**instruments**’. Both Jewish and Pagan religions also had their prophets, whom they believed were under spirit-control.

Paul hints at this in **1 Corinthians 12:1+2**. But, because men recognised the existence of both good and evil spirits, it was essential to determine by which spirit a person was being ‘**possessed**’ and ‘**controlled**’.

We know that during the ministry of the Lord Himself, there were times when He encountered and dealt with people who were possessed by evil spirits. The man at **Gadara**, and the spirit-controlled son of the man who came to Jesus because he said, the disciples couldn’t cure the lad. **Matthew 17:14-20**. **Acts 16:16-19** records the experience of Paul at Philippi, in dealing with a spirit possessed girl.

With this in mind, Paul lays down **two criteria** that must be used in making this judgment.

1. ‘Sanity’.

For centuries about **500 B.C.**, in fact, the Greeks had flocked to temples where priests or priestesses were believed to contact and be controlled by the gods, for who they acted as ‘**mouthpieces**’, as the gods spoke through them to deliver messages.

Whether it was real or fake, when these people were under the control of their gods they foamed at the mouth, their hair streaming out, and their limbs wildly flailing, as in an epileptic fit, all of which was taken to prove that they were being ‘**moved**’ by the spirit of the god whom they served.

‘**Not so the prophets of the church**’. They did not scream or foam at the mouth, or roll on the ground! The Holy Spirit enlightened their minds and sharpened their vision. They didn’t claim that they were the mouthpiece of God, but the messengers of God.

2. The credit of honour to Christ.

The well-used Christian confession of faith in New Testament times was ‘**Jesus is Lord**’, and as Paul reveals in **1 Corinthians 12:3**, this was the formula by which the prophets were to be judged either true or false. Bear in mind that, beginning with **Caesar Augustus, Roman Emperors** had begun to regard themselves ‘**gods**’, and everyone in the Empire was required to recognize and acknowledge this!

Citizens had to declare their loyalty to **Caesar** as a god by saying the words, ‘**Caesarea Kyrios**’, ‘**Caesar is Lord**’. In fact, at the entrance to every Roman Camp there was an altar onto which the soldiers were expect to throw a pinch of incense in the worship of the Emperor, whilst saying those words, ‘**Caesar is Lord**’, and, woe betide any man who failed to do so!

But when the favour with which Rome had originally looked on Christians turned into persecution, this affirmations of loyalty to **Caesar** was something that the Christians also were required to make, and failure to make it usually meant death.

At the same time, there was a quite different affirmation that was being freely made by both Jewish and Pagan enemies of the church. **They** were saying, as Paul records in **1 Corinthians 12:3**, ‘**Jesus is accursed**’, and obviously, only the enemies of Christ would utter those words!

Furthermore, when a Christian refused to speak those words which were taken as an acknowledgment of **Caesar’s deity**, their refusal was taken as a **denial** of his deity and that was treason which brought the death-sentence.

Thus, the distinction between the prophet inspired by the Holy Spirit, and the false prophet was, in this way, easily made. The one was happy to say, 'Jesus is Lord', whilst the other, because he was under the influence of an evil spirit said, 'Jesus is accursed'.

John also writes about the importance of making this distinction in 1 John 4:1-3. One needs little imagination to understand that in a pagan world, there were many who pretended to be possessed and controlled by the gods, so that they might claim to be speaking in their names.

The significant contrast between these frenzied fakers, and the calmness of the Spirit-led Christian prophets are, as Paul states in 1 Corinthians 14:26-33, 'The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets'. In other words, there was no wild abandonment in the manner in which they delivered their message.

Everything was done in an orderly manner, because 'God is not the author of confusion, but of peace'. A final observation, the exercise of the 'gift of discerning of spirits' was to be used when several prophets spoke in the service. See 1 Corinthians 14:29.

c. The ability to speak in other languages.

The word 'divers', 'genos' is race, stock, family. The word 'genos' is used 21 times in the New Testament and for the most part indicates one's nationality. This helps us understand what the gift of tongues was all about. The word 'tongues', 'glossa' is defined as a tongue, language. Clearly, the language spoken was of differing nationalities.

One who had the gift of tongues was able to speak a language of another race of people without ever studying the language.

Modern day 'tongue speaking'. What is it?

1. Books, giving instruction how to speak in tongues are easy to obtain, and instruction is often given in 'Pentecostal' assemblies to those who are anxious to learn!

When Philip Slate worked with the Wembley congregation, a man who professed to possess the 'gift of tongues', offered to give him a 'demonstration'! This could hardly be described as 'the work of the Holy Spirit'.

2. Scientific studies by highly qualified people have proved that 'glossolalia' is a learned behaviour.

This is how it is described by Dr Felicity Goodman, a Psychological Anthropologist, in her work entitled 'Speaking in tongues. A cross-cultural study in Glossolalia', which was published by the University of Chicago Press, in 1972. She studied tape-recordings of tongue-speaking, made in Pentecostal Churches in American, Spain Mayan, and in other English-speaking groups, as well as pagan rituals in Japan, Africa, Borneo and Indonesia.

Her concluding statement reads, 'Glossolalia is a learned behaviour, because direct instruction is given on how to speak in tongues.' Just over 25 years ago in 1987, in fact, in 'The Encyclopaedia of Religion', Dr Goodman wrote, 'Modern researchers accept that there is an association between trance and glossolalia.'

Another Researcher, Dr. Sheila A. Womack, pointed to the similarities between modern tongue-speaking and what is called 'T.S.', the abbreviation used for 'trouette syndrome', which is a disorder of the nervous system that is demonstrated by 'uncontrolled movements and sounds'

And one more testimony, the University of Pennsylvania took brain images of five women who were said to be speaking in tongues and discovered that the frontal lobes, the 'thinking' reasoning part of the brain, through which people control what they do were inactive. And the sounds were being produced by the part of the brain that is responsible for emotions and feelings.

Furthermore, the scans also recorded a reduction in the activity of the left claudate, the part of the brain which is active when the subject is experiencing positive emotion or pleasure. The researchers came to the conclusion that the subjects had yielded some control over their bodies and their emotions. And they knew it. And were enjoying it.

Philip's Slate was told that to speak in tongues one must put his mind into 'neutral, take a deep breath, and let the sound come out'! It is impossible to believe that they were acting under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

‘Tongues’ are mentioned **three times** in the **Book of Acts**. Note that in 1611, the word ‘tongue’ meant ‘language’. **Acts 2:3+4. Pentecost**. Notice the definition, ‘other tongues’. The phrase, ‘unknown tongues’ is not found in the Scriptures. What was heard were not incomprehensible noises, not ‘babble’, but ‘known’ languages.

In fact, considering the number of nations represented in the chapter, **16 in all**, the miracle was that they all heard in the language in which they were born. This fact has raised an interesting question, **was this only a miracle of speech, but was there also a miracle of hearing!**

The House of Cornelius. Acts 10:44-48. Although Cornelius was a Roman it seems evident from the special attention he received from the Holy Spirit, that he was a proselyte. He had embraced Judaism, to some extent, so that his prayers were being heard in heaven.

Notice also, **Acts 11:15**, that the reference is to ‘the same ‘gift’ as at the beginning’ suggests that the bestowal of this gift wasn’t something that had recurred very frequently up to that time. This kind of event wasn’t something with which Peter and his Jewish brethren had encountered before.

Ephesus. Acts 19:1-7. The men involved in this incident were also Jews who had received the baptism of John after it had been superseded by the Lord’s Baptism. These examples suggest that the gift of tongues was bestowed, initially at least, to enable the message to be preached in a manner that provided the Jews that the Gospel was from God.

1. Peter in **Acts 2**, refers to **Joel 2:28**. ‘It shall come to pass.....pour out My Spirit...’

2. In **Isaiah 28:11** the **A.V.** use of the word ‘stammering’ is likely to be misunderstood but doesn’t mean stuttering!

Look at **1 Corinthians 14:21** and you will see that Paul reveals that the statement of **Isaiah** predicted the gift of tongues! Using Paul’s statement, we see that through the prophet **Isaiah**, God declared that He would speak to ‘**this people,**’ the disobedient Jews through the gift of language.

Now look at **Acts 18:7**, and you will see that one of the first converts in Corinth, was **Justus** a ‘**God worshipper,**’ which is a term for a devout keeper of the Law. And his house was ‘**next to the synagogue**’.

You must imagine the first meetings of the Christians in Corinth meeting with the apostle Paul, in the **House of Justus**, next door to the synagogue, exercising the gift of tongues, **after** they had the hands of Paul the apostle laid on them! If this occurred, the Jews would wonder what was happening!

The gifts were **originally** bestowed by the Holy Spirit, as witnessed on the Day of Pentecost. **Later**, they were bestowed by the imposition of the hands of the Lord’s apostles. Hence, Paul writes to Timothy, ‘**do not neglect the gift**’. **2 Timothy 1:6**.

In **Acts 8**, the apostles Peter and John went to Samaria, and laid hands on the converts, **Acts 8:17**, and Simon the Sorcerer **saw** that in this way the Holy Spirit was given. This can only refer to the bestowal of the gifts of the Spirit, because at their baptism, the Samaritans would have received the ‘**dorea**’ of the Spirit, as promised in the Gospel. **Acts 2:38+39**.

Furthermore, the laying on of the hands of the apostles must have been followed by a demonstration of spiritual gifts, because Simon ‘**saw**’ something that led him to ask that he also, might be given the same power, **Acts 8:18**. However, since those who received the gifts in this way weren’t able to pass on the power, the bestowal of spiritual gifts by the laying on of the hands of an apostle passed away with the deaths of the apostles themselves.

We have already looked at the claims of those people who profess to speak in **tongues** today and, I hope we have seen how mistaken they are. Perhaps ‘**self-deceived**’ is the kinder and more accurate description of their condition.

Biblical tongue speaking.

1. In **1 Corinthians 14**, the term ‘**unknown**’, in regard to tongues was italicized in the **KJV** because it doesn’t appear in the original Greek text, **1 Corinthians 14:2+4+13+14+19+27**.

By inserting this word into their translation, the translators were attempting to aid the English reader. They undoubtedly were hoping to convey the idea that the languages to which Paul referred were ‘unknown’ to the speaker, i.e., **the speaker had no prior training by which to learn or know the language.**

He spoke the language strictly by God’s miraculous empowerment. ‘Unknown’ certainly wasn’t intended to convey the idea that the tongues were unknown **to all humans** and, as such, were non-earthly, non-human languages.

2. The events reported at the very beginning of the Christian religion. **Acts 2** set the precedent for understanding that tongue-speaking entailed no more than the ability to speak a foreign human language, which the speaker **had not studied**, to people from a variety of geographical locales, **Parthians, Medes, Arabians. Acts 2:9-11.**

The unbiased Bible student must conclude that what is described in detail in **Acts 2** is the same phenomenon alluded to in **1 Corinthians 14**. All tongue-speaking in the Bible consisted of **known human languages**, ideally known to the very audience being addressed that were unknown, i.e., unstudied, unlearned, by the one who was speaking the language.

3. There is simply no such thing as an ‘ecstatic utterance’ in the New Testament. The tongue-speaking of **1 Corinthians 14** entailed human language, not incoherent gibberish. A simple reading of the chapter demonstrates that known human languages are under consideration.

For example, Paul paralleled tongue-speaking with the use of the trumpet in warfare. If the bugler sounded meaningless noise, the military would be thrown into confusion.

It was imperative for the bugler to blow the proper notes and tones, i.e., meaningful musical ‘**language,**’ so that the army would understand what was being communicated, whether to charge, engage, or retreat. Sound without sense fails to achieve the very purpose of tongue-speaking.

Paul then stated, ‘**So it is with you. Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying? You will just be speaking into the air. Undoubtedly there are all sorts of languages in the world, yet none of them is without meaning. If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and the speaker is a foreigner to me.**’ **1 Corinthians 14:9-11.**

Obviously, Paul was referring to human languages, those that exist ‘**in the world.**’ He envisioned a scenario where two individuals, who spoke different languages, are attempting to communicate with each other. If one speaks in **Spanish** and the other in **German**, as they attempt to speak to one another, each would be a ‘**foreigner**’ to the other.

Neither would understand what the other was attempting to say. Hence the need for tongue-speaking, i.e., the ability to speak human language unknown to the speaker but known to the recipient.

Later in the chapter, Paul quoted **Isaiah 28:11+12** where God threatened the Israelites with the fact that their failure to listen to Him, by means of the words spoken by His prophets, meant that He soon would be communicating to them through the language of their **Assyrian** conquerors, conquerors whom God would send against them.

This powerful illustration presupposes the fact that in both **Isaiah** and **1 Corinthians**, human languages are under consideration.

After quoting **Isaiah**, Paul drew the conclusion that tongue-speaking was intended by God to be directed to **unbelievers, 1 Corinthians 14:22. Why?**

Because it would prove to the **unbeliever** that the tongue-speaker, who didn’t possess the natural ability to speak that language, was being empowered by God to speak in the language spoken by the **unbeliever.**

The **unbeliever** would recognise the divine origin of the tongue-speaker’s ability, and thereby be willing to consider the words being spoken as the instructions of God. Again, an examination of **1 Corinthians 14** yields the result that no contextual justification exists for drawing the conclusion that the Bible refers to, let alone endorses, the notion of ‘**ecstatic**’ speech.

But what about Paul's passing reference to the 'tongues of angels' in 1 Corinthians 13:1? Wouldn't this reference prove that tongue-speaking could involve languages beyond those spoken by humans?

In the **first** place, consider the role, purpose, and activity of angels described in the Bible. The word 'angel', in Greek is 'angelos', in Hebrew it is the word 'malak' and it simply means 'messenger' one who 'speaks and acts in the place of the one who has sent him'. It doesn't mean merely 'to send,' but rather 'to send a messenger, message'.

It is true that angels in both the Old and New Testaments carried out a wide range of activities beyond message-bearing, including, worshipping God, Revelation 5:11+12, comforting, aiding, and protecting, Daniel 6:22 / Matthew 4:11 / Luke 22:43 / Acts 5:19 / Hebrews 1:14 and executing judgment and inflicting punishment and death, Matthew 13:49 / Acts 12:23.

But it still remains true to say that the meaning of the term 'angel' is a messenger, one who communicates a spoken message. Therefore, their principal role in God's scheme of things was to function as messengers to humans. Consequently, angels always are represented in Scripture as communicating in 'human language'.

In the **second** place, what logical reason exists for humans to speak in an alleged 'angelic' language that is different from human language? What would be the spiritual benefit?

The Bible certainly makes no provision for humans to communicate with angels in such a language, nor would there be any need for an angel to communicate to a human in a non-earthly language.

The whole point of 1 Corinthians 12+13 was to stress the need to function in the church in ways that were meaningful and understandable. Since God, by His very nature, never would do anything that is superfluous, unnecessary, or frivolous, it follows that He wouldn't bestow upon a human being the ability to speak in a non-human language.

The ability would serve no purpose! The Bible simply offers no rationale nor justification for identifying the 'tongues of angels' in 1 Corinthians 13:1 with some heavenly, otherworldly, non-earthly languages.

In the **third** place, if, in fact, the 'tongues of angels' refer to known human languages, what was Paul's point? Since angels were God's appointed spokesmen, they naturally would perform their assignment in such a way that God would be represented as He would want to be.

God's own angelic messengers would have complied with their responsibility in such a way and manner that they would have God's approval. In other words, angels would naturally articulate God's message as well as it could be expressed, i.e., perfectly.

When God inspired mere humans to communicate His will, He integrated their own educational background, stylistic idiosyncrasies, and vocabulary into their oral and literary productions. No such need would have existed for angels.

Their communications would have been unfiltered through human agency. Their announcements would have been the essence and pinnacle of eloquence and oratorical skill.

Perhaps, then, Paul wasn't drawing a contrast between human and nonhuman languages at all. Before referring to the 'tongues of angels,' he referred to 'the tongues of men.' Why would Paul say, 'Though I speak with the tongues of men'?

After all, isn't that precisely what all adult humans do? We humans speak at least one human language! Paul must have been referring, then, not to the ability to speak a human language, but to the ability to speak **all** human languages.

No tongue-speaker in the first-century church had the ability to speak **all** human languages. In fact, the textual evidence indicates that most tongue-speakers probably had the ability to speak **only one** human language, which he, himself, didn't understand, thus necessitating the need for an inspired interpreter, 1 Corinthians 12:30 / 1 Corinthians 14:26-28.

Paul could apparently speak more languages than any of the others, **1 Corinthians 14:18**. If the ‘**tongues of men**’ referred to the number of human languages, rather than referring to the ability to speak a human language, then the ‘**tongues of angels**’ would refer not to the ability to speak an angelic language but to the ability to speak human languages ‘**the way angels do**’.

Here, then, would have been Paul’s point, even if a tongue-speaker could speak **every** human language known to man, and even if that tongue-speaker could speak those human languages with the efficiency, skill, and perfection that God’s angelic messengers have spoken them in history, without love, the ability would be wasted.

With this understanding of the text, Paul wasn’t contrasting human with nonhuman language. He was encompassing both the quantity, if I could speak **all** human languages and the quality, if I could speak them perfectly, of speaking human language.

One **final point** on the matter of the ‘**tongues of angels**’ merits mention. Even if the expression actually refers to angelic tongues that are nonhuman, it still is likely that tongue-speakers were incapable of speaking such languages. **Why?** Paul was speaking hypothetically and hyperbolically.

No human being, with the exception of perhaps Jesus, has ever been able to speak in **all** human languages. For Paul to suggest such was to pose a hypothetical situation. It was to exaggerate the facts.

So Paul’s meaning was, ‘**even if I were capable of speaking all human languages, which I’m not.**’ Likewise, no human being has ever been able to speak the tongues of angels. So Paul’s meaning was, ‘**even if I were capable of speaking the languages of angels, which I’m not.**’

This conclusion is supported further by the verse that follows the reference to the ‘**tongues of angels.**’ There, Paul used **two** additional hypothetical events when he said, ‘**If I, know all mysteries and all knowledge**’ and ‘**if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains,**’ **1 Corinthians 13:2**.

But no one on the planet, with the exception of Deity, has understood **all** mysteries and **all** knowledge, nor has had faith that could literally remove mountains. Again, Paul was merely saying, ‘**even if I could do such things, which I can’t.**’

4. Paul stated very clearly that tongue-speaking was a ‘**sign to unbelievers**’, not believers. **1 Corinthians 14:22**.

Tongue-speaking was to be done in **their** presence, to convince **them** of the truth being spoken, i.e., to **confirm** the Word.

The tongue-speaking being practiced today is done in the presence of those who **already believe** that tongue-speaking is occurring and, when an **unbeliever**, who is sceptical of the genuineness of the activity, makes an appearance in such an assembly, the claim often is made that tongue-speaking cannot occur because of the presence of unbelief.

Once again, the New Testament teaches the **very opposite** of those who claim the ability to speak in tongues today.

5. The recipient of a miraculous gift in the New Testament could ‘**control himself**’. **1 Corinthians 14:32**.

He wasn’t overwhelmed by the Holy Spirit so that he began to babble or flail about. Tongue-speaking today is frequently practiced in a setting where the individuals who claim to be exercising the gift are speaking uncontrollably at the very time that others are either doing the same thing or engaging in some other action.

This overlapping activity is in direct violation of **three** of Paul’s commands.

1. That each individual takes their turn, one at a time.

2. That no more than **three tongue-speakers** speak per service, and

3. That tongue-speakers **remain silent** if **no interpreter** is present. **1 Corinthians 14:27+28**.

The claim by many today, to be able to speak in tongues is simply out of harmony with New Testament teaching. Anyone can babble, make up sounds, and claim he or she is speaking in tongues. But such conduct is **no sign** today. It is precisely the same phenomenon that pagan religions have practiced through the centuries.

In the New Testament, however, no one questioned the authenticity of tongue-speaking. **Why?** The speaker was speaking a **known human language** that could be understood by those present who knew that language and knew that that particular speaker **didn't know** that language **beforehand**.

If and when self-proclaimed tongue-speakers today demonstrate that genuine New Testament gift, their message could be accepted as being from God. But no one today has demonstrated that genuine New Testament gift.

d. The ability to interpret the languages used.

As one had the gift of speaking a language from other Christians, so some were able to **miraculously understand the language** and **expound the meaning** to others in a native tongue of the audience even though they had no formal training in the language.

Along with the gift of 'speaking in tongues', another spiritual gift mentioned in the list found in **1 Corinthians 12:10** is the gift of 'interpreting tongues'. The gift of interpreting tongues is the ability to **translate a foreign language** into the language of the hearers.

The gift of interpreting tongues is always alongside the gift of speaking in tongues. It is a separate gift, but it is always used in conjunction with the gift of speaking in tongues. A person with the gift of **interpreting tongues** could understand what a tongues-speaker was saying even though he **didn't know** the language that was being spoken.

This is what distinguishes the spiritual gift from the natural gift of being able to understand and speak a variety of languages. The tongues interpreter would then communicate the message of the tongues speaker to everyone else, so all could understand and benefit from the truth being spoken.

The tongues were known languages, not '**ecstatic utterances**'. According to the apostle Paul, and in agreement with the tongues described in **Acts**, speaking in tongues is valuable to the one hearing God's message in his or her own language, but it is useless to everyone else unless it is interpreted, translated. Paul's concern is edification of the church. **1 Corinthians 14:5+12**.

Paul's conclusion regarding tongues that weren't interpreted is powerful, '**But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue**', **1 Corinthians 14:19**. There is no benefit to others in hearing something they cannot understand.

More importantly, there is no benefit, and much harm, done in churches where the speaking and interpreting of a tongue brings forth that which doesn't line up with Scripture or which cannot be verified in Scripture.

Paul was also concerned about '**order**' in worship. His concern was that everything is done for edification of the church. He goes on to say that there should only be **two or three** speaking in a tongue and **one** should interpret. If there is **no interpreter** present, then one should be **quiet**, **1 Corinthians 14:26-28**.

The temporal nature of the gift of tongues assumes that the gift of interpretation of tongues was also of a temporal nature. If the gift of speaking in tongues were active in the church today, it would be performed in agreement with Scripture.

It would be a real and intelligible language, **1 Corinthians 14:10**. It would be for the purpose of communicating God's Word to a person of another language, **Acts 2:6-12**, and it would also be in accordance with **1 Corinthians 14:33**, '**For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.**'

The duration of miraculous gifts

Once God revealed the entirety of the information that He wished to make available to mankind, **later contained in what we call the New Testament**, the need for miraculous confirmation of the **oral Word** came to an end. Now, people can sit down with a New Testament, the written Word of God, and with honest and diligent study, conclude that it is God's Word.

Many preachers and teachers today have failed to acknowledge this crucial Biblical factor. They fail to face the fact that we have absolutely no need for the miraculous. Since the purpose of miracles has been achieved, the miracles, themselves, have ceased. I repeat, the Bible teaches that miracles are no longer necessary.

We have everything we need to function in this life, to be pleasing to God, and to survive spiritually. **2 Peter 1:3**. Spiritual maturity is now within the grasp of every single individual who chooses to access the means to maturity, the written Word of God.

To insist that we have need for the miraculous today is to undermine, and to cast aspersions upon, the all-sufficiency of God's Word. **1 Corinthians 1:22 / 2 Timothy 3:16+17**.

The most detailed treatment of the phenomena of miracles in the New Testament, including tongue-speaking, healing, and prophecy, is **1 Corinthians 12 / 1 Corinthians 13 and 1 Corinthians 14**. These **three chapters** were written to Christians at Corinth because miracles were being abused and misused.

1 Corinthians 12 defines the miracles. **1 Corinthians 13** indicates their duration. **1 Corinthians 14** explains their disposition. In **1 Corinthians 12**, Paul argued that the body, **the church**, should function harmoniously by using miraculous gifts properly.

In **1 Corinthians 13**, Paul argued that **love** is a more excellent attribute than miraculous gifts. After all, miraculous gifts **i.e., prophecy, tongue-speaking, supernatural knowledge, etc.** were going to fail, cease, vanish, and be done away, **1 Corinthians 13:8**.

These miraculous gifts are identified in the text with the expression **'in part,' 1 Corinthians 13:9+10**. The **'in part,'** or miraculous, would cease and be done away when the **'perfect'** had come.

But to what does the 'perfect' refer? The Greek word translated **'perfect'** is **'teleios'**. The term doesn't refer to **'perfect'** in the sense typically understood by the average modern English reader, i.e., to be sinless.

Following this faulty notion, some have concluded that the **'perfect'** refers to Jesus, since He has been the only perfect person, Jesus is never described as a **'that'**. Other interpretations apply **'perfect'** to heaven, **the only perfect place that will be free of sin and imperfection**, or Christian maturity and perfect love, **the perfect condition or quality**.

But, in context, Paul wasn't contrasting qualities or places. He was contrasting quantities, i.e., those things that were incomplete and partial, **'miraculous gifts'** with that which would be total and complete, **'the fully revealed Word of God'**.

The inaccuracy of these interpretations is seen further in the Greek definition of **'teleios'**. The word refers to totality that which is whole, brought to its end, finished, and lacking nothing necessary to completeness. When referring to persons, **'teleios'** refers to being full-grown, adult, and mature.

Used in its neuter form, Paul was referring to **a thing**, not a person, something that, when completed or finished, would **replace** the incomplete or partial, i.e., the miraculous gifts, which clearly had only temporary significance.

Whereas James used the term **'teleios'** to refer to the all-sufficiency of God's Word in its ability to achieve everything it was intended to do, **James 1:25**. The exegete is forced to conclude that Paul's use of **'perfect'** referred to the completed revelation or totally revealed New Testament Scriptures.

The revelation of God's will was completed in its entirety when the final book of the New Testament, **Revelation**, was written by John prior to **A.D. 100**. Paul offered a useful illustration to clarify his point.

When the church possessed only bits and pieces of God's will, as revealed through scattered miraculous gifts and the gradual production, between approximately **A.D. 57** and **A.D. 95**, of the written documents from the inspired writers of the New Testament, it couldn't achieve full spiritual maturity.

It therefore was ‘like a child’, 1 Corinthians 13:11. It lacked the necessary essential elements to reach spiritual adulthood. However, when the totality of God’s will, which became the New Testament, had been revealed, the church then had the means available to become ‘a man,’ 1 Corinthians 13:11.

Once the church had access to all of God’s written Word, the means by which the Word was given, i.e., miraculous gifts, would be obsolete, useless, and therefore ‘put away.’ 1 Corinthians 13:11. Notice that in this illustration, Paul likened miracles to ‘childish things.’ 1 Corinthians 13:11.

In other words, miracles were the spiritual equivalents of ‘baby dummies’ or ‘pacifiers’ as the Americans call them, that were necessary while the church was in a state of infancy. Now that the church has access to ‘all truth,’ John 16:13, the use of tongue-speaking and other miraculous enhancements in the church today would be comparable to an adult man or woman sucking on a dummy!

Paul then explained his point by making a contrast between the initial necessity of miracles to reveal and confirm God’s Word, and the idea of ‘looking through a clouded mirror’. 1 Corinthians 13:12. Now please don’t think of a mirror like we have today, the mirror in those days was polished bronze and your reflection wasn’t as clear as it is today’s mirrors.

Once the entire contents of the New Testament had been revealed, the miraculous gifts no longer would be necessary. Having all of God’s revealed Word would enable one to be face to face with that Word rather than ‘looking through a clouded mirror,’ i.e., having partial access.

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 13:11+12, ‘Now I know in part (i.e., my knowledge of God’s revelation is incomplete and partial due to limited access via the miraculous element), but then (i.e., when all of God’s Word is revealed) shall I know fully even as also I was fully known (i.e., I shall be made to know or taught thoroughly).’

Paul made essentially the same point to the Ephesians that he made to the Corinthians. Miracles, the ‘gifts’ given by Christ, Ephesians 4:8 were to last ‘till the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God.’ Ephesians 4:13. Two significant observations emerge from this latter verse.

1. The word translated ‘till’ is ‘mechri’, and was used as a conjunction to indicate the ‘terminus ad quem,’ finishing point, of the miraculous offices, mentioned in Ephesians 4:11, bestowed as gifts by Christ.
2. The phrase ‘the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God’ often is misunderstood to refer to the eventual ‘unifying’ of all believers in Christ.

But this conclusion can’t be correct. Both Scripture and common sense dispel such a notion. Complete unity within Christendom will never occur. Those who profess affiliation with Christianity are in a hopeless state of disunity.

Catholicism and Protestant denominationalism are fractured into a plethora of factions and splinter groups, literally thousands of divisions and disagreements. Besides, Protestant denominationalism didn’t exist in the New Testament era, and the New Testament neither countenances nor legitimizes any such ‘manifestation’ of Christianity.

Nor will unity ever be achieved even within churches of Christ. The first-century congregations didn’t attain complete internal unity. Nor have the post first-century congregations achieved unity within.

In contrast with this interpretation, notice the use of the articles in the phrases, ‘the faith’ and ‘the knowledge.’ Contextually, Paul was referring to ‘the system of faith’ alluded to so often in the New Testament. Jude urged his readers to ‘contend earnestly for the faith’. Jude 3. Paul referred to himself when he quoted others as saying, ‘The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.’ Galatians 1:23.

Luke reported that ‘a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith,’ Acts 6:7. Elymas sought to ‘turn aside the proconsul from the faith,’ Acts 13:8. The early disciples were exhorted to ‘continue in the faith,’ Acts 14:22. Due to Paul’s repeat visits in Lycaonia, ‘the churches were strengthened in the faith,’ Acts 16:5.

So ‘the faith’ and ‘the knowledge’ refer to the ‘completed body of information’ that constitutes the Christian religion. Indeed, eight verses earlier, Ephesians 4:5, Paul already had referred to ‘the faith’ as the summation and totality of Christian doctrine, now situated in the source of the New Testament.

An honest exegete is driven to conclude that once the precepts of New Testament Christianity were revealed on Earth, the miraculous element no longer was necessary. Miracles lasted until 'the faith' was completely revealed.

They had served their purpose, in the same way that scaffolding is useful while a building is under construction. However, once construction is complete, the scaffolding is removed and discarded as unnecessary and superfluous paraphernalia.

The Fruit of the Spirit

Before one can understand 'the fruit of the Spirit,' one must understand the context of Galatians 5 where 'the fruit of the Spirit' is revealed. In this chapter, Paul exhorts Christians not to allow their liberty to degenerate into a 'yoke of bondage.'

Some individuals in the Galatian church had 'fallen from grace' because they sought to be 'justified by the law.' The Judaizing teachers were binding the old law upon the church and, by such, had hindered some in obeying the truth, Galatians 5:7. These false teachers of Judaism were troubling the church, Galatians 5:12.

However, as Christians, we have been called to liberty, liberty from the old law, from sin, and from the bondage of sin. Thus, Paul exhorts, 'do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh,' Galatians 5:13. One reason we ought not to use our liberty as a license to sin is because 'we walk in the Spirit,' Galatians 5:16. To 'walk in the Spirit' means to walk according to the Spirit's teaching through His sword 'which is the word of God,' Ephesians 6:17.

This is the same as being 'led by the Spirit,' Galatians 5:18, and it is the opposite of walking after the flesh. The Spirit and the flesh are at odds, Galatians 5:17. They are in constant conflict. They are opposed to one another. To further illustrate this conflict, Paul contrasts 'the works of the flesh,' Galatians 5:19-21 with 'the fruit of the Spirit,' Galatians 5:22+23.

In verse 16 of Galatians 5, Paul commands, 'Walk in the Spirit.' Let's be sure, there are certain results of walking in the Spirit. There is the benefit of not fulfilling the lust of the flesh, Galatians 5:16.

The same thought is declared by David in Psalm 119:11, 'I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.' When we engraft God's Word upon our hearts, it will protect us against the fiery darts of Satan. Jesus knew this lesson when He was tempted of the devil, Matthew 4. Jesus guarded Himself from each temptation by the Word of God. He answered the tempter's temptation with 'it is written,' Matthew 4:4+7+10.

Also, if we 'walk in the Spirit', we are 'not under the law,' Galatians 5:18. 'The law' in this verse is the Mosaic Law. Earlier in this chapter, we are told Christ is become of no effect unto those who justify themselves by 'the law,' Galatians 5:4. To return to the Mosaic law is to abandon the law of Christ and is to fall from grace. Some believe this means we are not under any law.

However, we are under 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus' which frees us from 'the law of sin and death,' Romans 8:2. We are to 'fulfil the law of Christ' by bearing one another's burdens, Galatians 6:2. And, we are to look into 'the perfect law of liberty.' James 1:25.

Also, consider this, since 'sin is the transgression of the law,' 1 John 3:4, to say we aren't under law is to say we haven't nor cannot sin. Clearly, we are under law, the law of Christ, but we are not under 'the law', the Law of Moses. Further, 'the fruit of the Spirit' results from walking in the Spirit.

Again, when we engraft God's Word upon our hearts, 'the fruit of the Spirit' will be seen within us. The qualities of 'love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance' will characterise us. The Spirit will produce these qualities within us by the Word He has inspired.

'The fruit of the Spirit' is the produce of the Spirit. In other words, it is the product that is produced by the Spirit's influence. 'The fruit of the Spirit' isn't a Christian nor the fruit of a Christian which some have mistakenly taught.

In fact, the fruit of a Christian is more than just a Christian. It is true that in the natural world, mankind, animals, and plants produce after their kind. Christians should also produce after their kind, and in this sense, the fruit of a Christian is another Christian.

However, Christians produce other fruit besides Christians. In the **Sermon on the Mount**, Jesus taught, **‘Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.’ Matthew 7:20**. Within the context, Jesus is speaking concerning false teachers who come **‘in sheep’s clothing’** but inwardly are **‘ravaging wolves,’ Matthew 7:15**. To illustrate how we can know a false teacher, He taught a good tree produces good fruit, whereas an evil tree produces evil fruit.

Is the only fruit of a false teacher, other false teachers? Of course not! False teachers cause division, false hope, and disillusionment to only name a few. So, it is with Christians. Christians should evangelise, but there are other fruits which they should bear, and one such fruit is the fruit of the Spirit.

Since the fruit of the Spirit is the produce of the Spirit, then **how does the Spirit produce the qualities of ‘love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance’ in Christians today?** The Spirit influences Christians today by the Spirit inspired Word.

Peter wrote, **‘For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.’ 2 Peter 1:21**.

It is this Word that will make us **‘wise for salvation,’ 2 Timothy 3:15** and **‘it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes,’ Romans 1:16**. It provides us with **‘everything we need for a godly life,’ 2 Peter 1:3**. Thus, nothing else is needed for it is all sufficient and will produce the right fruit.

In **the parable of the sower**, Jesus taught that a sower sowed seed by the way side, upon a rock, among thorns, and on good ground, **Luke 8:5-8**. Later, Jesus told us what the seed represents. He said, **‘The seed is the word of God,’ Luke 8:11**. So, the Word was sown in the hearts of men, but sadly the hearts of some men were like the soil of the way side, the rock, and the thorny ground.

Thankfully, when the Word of God is sown in other men whose hearts are like the soil of the good ground, it **‘brings forth fruit with patience,’** that is with constant perseverance, **Luke 8:15**. **What is the fruit of the Spirit?** It is what the Word provides and produces in the good soil of a person’s heart.

Contrasted to the Spirit produced fruit, **‘the works of the flesh’** are **‘the unfruitful works of darkness,’ Ephesians 5:9+11**. In other words, **‘the works of the flesh’** don’t yield a valuable or desirable fruit. The works of the flesh are the evil fruit of the evil tree. They bring forth no blessings and no real benefits.

Please take careful note that unlike the plural **‘acts of the flesh,’** **‘the fruit of the Spirit’** is singular. **‘Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance’** aren’t separate fruits but are characteristics or attributes of the singular **‘fruit of the Spirit.’**

Besides these **nine characteristics**, Paul adds **‘all goodness and righteousness and truth’** in **Ephesians 5:9**. Thus, giving us a total of **eleven attributes** of the fruit of the Spirit all of which are virtues of the highest moral and spiritual qualities.

These qualities or characteristics will be manifested in the lives of those **‘who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,’ Romans 8:1+4 / Galatians 5:16**. Like the **‘graces’** of **2 Peter 1**, if **‘the fruit of the Spirit’** **‘be in you, and abound, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.’ 2 Peter 1:8**.

In contrast, if they aren’t manifested in our lives, then we aren’t being **‘led of (or ‘by’) the Spirit,’ Galatians 5:18 / Romans 8:14**. And again, like the **‘graces’** of **2 Peter 1:5-7**, if they are lacking, then we are **‘near-sighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins. 2 Peter 1:9**. Thus, the proof of the tree is in the fruit.

Jesus said, **‘the tree is known by his fruit,’ Matthew 12:33**. And, **‘Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.’ Matthew 7:20**. So, let us determine to always **‘walk after the Spirit’** by following His Word in order that we may manifest these marvellous traits, the fruit of the Spirit.

Love

The fruit of the Spirit is the product that the Spirit produces by or through the Word which the Spirit has given us. This singular ‘fruit’ is contrasted to the multiple facets of ‘the works of the flesh.’ Furthermore, it is characterised by, ‘love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance’. Galatians 5:22+23.

These aren’t separate fruits but are characteristics of the one ‘fruit of the Spirit.’ A person may speak about a juicy red apple. We recognize juicy and red are characteristics of this apple. These characteristics describe this fruit. Thus, the same is true with ‘the fruit of the Spirit’, and the first descriptive characteristic which Paul ascribes to this marvellous fruit is ‘love.’

As Paul describes the fruit of the Spirit, he begins with the most prevalent characteristic. It stands loftily above the others. Love stands in the heights because it directly stems from God. John wrote, ‘And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.’ 1 John 4:16. Furthermore, love stands exalted because all the other traits of this beautiful fruit stem from this first attribute, ‘love’.

In Koine Greek of the first century, there were four different words for ‘love’. The word used in Galatians 5:22 is ‘agape.’ This love is a sacrificial love that seeks the highest good for its object. It is more than just mere emotions and affections for it is projected from the intellect.

While mere emotions and affections are extinguished because of hatred, sin, and wickedness, this love is willing to give of itself. ‘But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.’ Romans 5:8.

Thus, it is a love not simply of words and tongue, but of deeds and truth, 1 John 3:18.

The best definition of this word is found in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 which says, ‘Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.’

When asked ‘which is the great commandment in the law?’ Jesus said, ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ Matthew 22:36-39.

From this, we learn there are ‘three proper recipients of love’.

1. We are to love ‘God’. ‘We love him, because he first loved us.’ 1 John 4:19.

Earlier in the same chapter, John explained how God manifested His love towards us. John wrote, ‘God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.’ 1 John 4:9. Certainly this isn’t the only way God demonstrates His love. He has given us life, breath, and our very beings. We are because of Him.

He has also given us His word that we might know how to gain eternal life and how to live a happy and fulfilled life in this world. Because God has given us so much, and because we are fully dependent upon Him, we should love Him above all else. ‘We are to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. This is the first commandment.’ Mark 12:29+30.

In this context, the heart is the centre of our emotions. Love is an emotion and our love to God should reflect our deepest emotion. The soul is a person’s spiritual nature, his inner being, his self. Our love to God should stem from our inner most being.

The mind is the centre of our intellect. Though love is an emotion, it is more than just an emotion. Our love toward God is actions based upon our knowledge of God and His will.

Finally, the strength is a person’s physical being. Our bodies are used in our various expressions of love, and in expressing our love to God, we use ‘the fruit of our lips’ to offer the sacrifice of praise, Hebrews 13:15, our holy hands are lifted up in prayer, 1 Timothy 2:8, and our feet takes us into all the world to preach the Gospel, Matthew 28:18+19 / Romans 10:15. All in all, Jesus commands all mankind to love God with our entire being.

2. We are to love our ‘neighbour’.

One of the most obvious question that arises is ‘Who is my neighbour?’ To answer this question, Jesus told the story of the Samaritan, which incidentally Jesus or the Bible never calls ‘good’, who helped a man who fell into the hands of thieves and was left half dead, **Luke 10:29-37**. While lying there, a priest and a Levite saw him but passed him by on the other side.

Thankfully, a benevolent Samaritan saw him, helped him, and provided for him. To answer the question, Jesus asked a very pointed question in **Luke 10:36**, ‘Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?’ And the answer was in **Luke 10:37** ‘The one who had mercy on him.’ In the end, we learn that a neighbour was one who showed mercy. In application, Jesus said, ‘Go, and do likewise.’

Thus, a neighbour would include our enemies, **Matthew 5:44**, our fellow man, **Ephesians 5:1+2**, and our brethren, **1 John 4:20**.

In fact, love should be a distinctive mark of God’s people. Jesus taught, ‘By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.’ **John 13:35**. This is a serious matter! **John** in his epistle wrote, ‘Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.’ **1 John 4:8**.

In context, **John** is writing about our love one for another and makes this application, ‘Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another’. **1 John 4:11**.

3. Finally, we are to ‘love ourselves’.

Though some have placed too much emphasis here, the principle is still taught.

Certainly, we must be on guard not to love ourselves more than we should and not to love ourselves above others, **Philippians 2:3+4**. Nevertheless, we cannot love our neighbour as ourselves without loving ourselves.

In **Ephesians 5:29**, Paul wrote, ‘After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church’. A general principle is stated. Generally speaking, a person doesn’t hate his own body. Paul applies this general principle to marriage. Men ought to love their wives as their own bodies, **Ephesians 5:28+33**, and the man who neglects his wife, neglects himself.

Instead of hating one’s own body, a person nourishes and cherishes it. The word ‘nourish’ means to nurture or bring it up. This is the same word translated ‘nurture’ in **Ephesians 6:4**. The word ‘cherish’ means to warm or keep warm, to foster with tender care. Thus, we should love ourselves by nourishing and cherishing ourselves.

1. Love is the great ‘motivator’.

Because of God’s love, He sent His Son to this world and to die for our sins. **John** wrote, ‘this is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.’ **1 John 4:9+10**. His love should, first, motivate us to love Him. ‘We love him, because he first loved us.’ **1 John 4:19**.

2. His love should motivate us to ‘obey Him’.

Jesus said, ‘If you love me, keep my commandments,’ **John 14:15**. Furthermore, Paul wrote that a working faith is to be motivated by love. ‘For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.’ **Galatians 5:6**. In fact, anything that a person does, if it isn’t motivated by love, it is empty profitless to oneself, **1 Corinthians 13:1-3**.

The greatest expression of love is for ‘a man lay down his life for his friends,’ **John 15:13**. Surely, we all realise that Jesus was speaking about His own sacrifice for us. Now, listen to the application, ‘This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.’ **1 John 3:16**. ‘He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.’

Joy.

The singular fruit of the Spirit is characterised by ‘love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance’, **Galatians 5:22+23**. These aren’t different fruits but various characteristics of the same fruit.

As one would describe an apple or an orange, he would begin with the most prevalent characteristics, those that stand out above the others. So it is with the fruit of the Spirit. The characteristic that stands out the most is love and then 'joy'. 'Joy' is delight or to experience great pleasure.

It is the opposite of weeping, lamenting, and sorrow, [John 16:20-22](#). Some synonyms of joy are gladness and rejoicing. From the accusation made against Jesus, [Matthew 11:19](#), we know that he was a man of joy.

He was, in many ways, a man of sorrow, yet, 'for the joy that was set before him,' He 'endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.' [Hebrews 12:2](#). The anticipated joy of being exalted to the right hand of God helped the Lord to overcome the sorrows He endured.

Because Christians are followers of Christ, we need His joy, a joy that will help us endure the trials of this life. When Paul wrote to the church in [Philippi](#), they were undergoing persecution and were suffering for Christ's sake, [Philippians 1:28-30](#).

Thus, Paul exhorts, 'Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord,' [Philippians 3:1](#), and 'Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice,' [Philippians 4:4](#). How could they rejoice when they were suffering? In the same way Jesus rejoiced.

By pressing 'toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus' and by looking to their reward in heaven, [Philippians 3:14+20](#), they could rejoice. The anticipated joy of being with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit throughout all eternity will help us to overcome the sorrows inflicted upon us by the trials of this life.

Yes, joy can lift us above trials and tribulation.

James exhorts, 'Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds,' [James 1:2](#). How can this be? How can we have joy while enduring various kinds of trials? Because true joy is independent of external forces. Externals can bring joy and sorrow, but they are usually short lived.

Many of the Hebrew Christians had lost property, and, yet, they joyfully accepted it because they knew that they had 'in heaven a better and an enduring substance,' [Hebrews 10:34](#). Paul and Silas could rejoice through prayer and song with their feet in stocks in the inner prison of [Philippi](#) because they had true joy.

It is for this reason, Peter could exhort, 'Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.' [1 Peter 4:12+13](#).

Notice how this idea is further expounded upon in the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount. In the last Beatitude, Jesus said, 'Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.' [Matthew 5:11](#). Blessings or happiness, joy, promised to the persecuted? Yes!

Jesus explains in the next verse, [Matthew 5:12](#) 'Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.' The anticipated joy of heaven brings great joy to those who are persecuted for Christ's sake. So, when the trials of life seem to get us down, let us remember the heavenly reward which will bring us great joy.

After exhorting the disciples to keep His word, Jesus said, 'I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.' [John 15:11](#). Jesus knew that true joy comes by keeping the commandments of God. Thus, He exhorted His disciples to obey the commandments of God in order to have joy. 'Joy', therefore, is a natural outgrowth of keeping God's commandments.

David wrote, 'Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night.' [Psalm 1:1+2](#).

Again, in [Psalm 112:1](#), he wrote, 'Praise the LORD. Blessed are those who fear the LORD, who find great delight in his commands.' Surely, we would agree with David when he said, 'The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart.' [Psalm 19:8](#).

Keep in mind, in order to properly obey God, one must know His will. In **John 15**, Jesus first instructed His disciples, then He told them the benefits of obedience, **‘that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.’** **John 15:11.**

In the **first of seven beatitudes** of **Revelation**, John pronounced a **three-fold blessing** upon the reader, the hearer, and those who keep those things which are written, **Revelation 1:3**. Instruction comes before obedience. In John’s introduction of his **first epistle**, he said he wrote those things **‘that your joy may be full’,** **1 John 1:4**. Again, instruction comes first, obedience follows, and joy results.

The **Book of Acts** is sometimes called **‘the book of joy’** because within its pages we find the joy of obedience. After the church was established on the marvellous day of Pentecost, the disciples **‘did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,’** **Acts 2:46.**

After the Ethiopian eunuch confessed and was baptised, **‘he went on his way rejoicing.’** **Acts 8:39.** After the Philippian Jailor repented and was baptised, **‘he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house,’** **Acts 16:34.**

Also, within the pages of **Acts**, we find the joy of being persecuted. After the apostles were beaten and brought before the Sanhedrin, they were told not to **‘speak in the name of Jesus.’** However, the apostles **‘rejoiced’** because **‘they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name’** and **‘ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ,’** **Acts 5:40-42.**

Joy also comes when priorities are properly set. Many have probably seen the acrostic for **JOY**. **Jesus** first, **others** second, and **yourself** last. This simple acrostic illustrates the importance of properly set priorities. When priorities are mixed or confused, the result is tragedy and sorrow, but when kept, they bring a harvest of joy. Properly set priorities begin with putting Jesus first. Jesus said the first and great commandment is **‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind’.** **Matthew 22:36-38.**

Next on God’s chain of priority is **others second**. Again, Jesus said, **‘and the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’** **Matthew 22:39.** In application Paul exhorted the Christians in **Philippi** to have the mind of Christ by esteeming others **‘better than themselves’** and looking **‘on the things of others,’** **Philippians 2:3-5.**

By putting others before ourselves, we place **ourselves last**. This is the golden rule of **Luke 6:31**, **‘Do to others as you would have them do to you.’**

With these thoughts, let us heed the admonition to rejoice by following Christ’s example of overcoming suffering, by obeying God’s commandments, and by setting our priorities in order. **‘For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit’.** **Romans 14:17.**

‘May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.’ **Romans 15:13.**

Peace

As we study the fruit of the Spirit, we need to be constantly reminded that it is a singular fruit with many characteristics. The fruit of the Spirit is described by Paul in **Galatians 5:22+23** which says. **‘But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.’** In this part of our study, we are concerned with **‘peace,’** the **third characteristic** of the fruit of the Spirit.

From the very beginning of the Lord’s ministry, we learn about peace. In the **Beatitudes**, Jesus said, **‘blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God’,** **Matthew 5:9**. This statement would have been shocking to the Jews of Jesus’ day because they were looking for a Messiah who would marshal a great army and lead them to world domination.

However, they, **like the Premillennialists of our day**, misunderstood the very nature of the Messiah and His kingdom. **Isaiah** prophesied the Messiah would be **‘the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end,’** **Isaiah 9:6+7.**

In an earlier prophecy, **Isaiah** described the peaceable nature of the Messianic kingdom in that citizens of that kingdom will turn instruments of war into instruments of peace. **Isaiah** wrote, ‘**They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.**’ **Isaiah 2:4.**

Further, **Isaiah** described the peaceful nature of the recipients of the Gospel, the citizens of the Messianic kingdom, the church. He wrote, ‘**The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the cobra’s den, the young child will put its hand into the viper’s nest.**’ **Isaiah 11:6-8.**

In each example of **Isaiah’s** description, the animals are natural enemies, and, yet, they live in harmony. There are no signs of hostility nor enmity. Such peace can be found in the kingdom of God.

During Jesus’ ministry, he called twelve men to be His apostles. Within this group, there were those who would be enemies had they not been followers of Jesus. Matthew was a ‘**publican**’ or ‘**tax collector**’ for the Roman Empire, **Matthew 10:3.**

Simon was a Zealot, and a Zealot was opposed to paying taxes to the pagan emperor of Rome. Yet, despite their political differences, they were united soldiers and disciples of ‘**the Prince of Peace.**’ **Isaiah 9:6** This, then, stands as a wonderful example of this peaceable nature of citizens of the kingdom as prophesied by **Isaiah.**

Another example is found in **Romans 14.** In context, Paul is dealing with eating meats, that is meats which were clean or unclean according to Old Testament law. The church in Rome was composed of both Jews and Gentiles. According to the law, the Jews could only eat meats which were clean. However, the Gentiles could eat any meat, clean or unclean. It made no difference to them. Of course, the old law was taken ‘**out of the way**’ and nailed to the cross, **Colossians 2:14 / Romans 7:1-4,** but because of conscience, many Jews couldn’t eat unclean meat.

Apparently, some Gentiles insisted on eating such meat even though it violated their brothers’ consciences. To solve the problem, Paul charges them to ‘**follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another,**’ **Romans 14:19.** **Why?**

Because ‘**the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,**’ **Romans 14:17.** Rather than offending a fellow Christian, Christians ought to seek for peace in matters of conscience.

A casual glance into the New Testament reveals that peace is promised to the followers of God. Jesus said, ‘**I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.**’ **John 16:33.**

To some, however, this brings up a contradiction for Jesus also said, ‘**Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword,**’ **Matthew 10:34.** So, **what does Jesus mean?**

Within the pages of Scripture, there are **three types of peace.**

1. There is the **absence of hostility** or having no enmity. Generally, when people call for peace, this is what they mean. They are looking for a time when there will be no wars or no fighting.
2. The second type of peace is **tranquillity** which is freedom from disturbance or a calm feeling.
3. The final peace is **reconciliation.** When two persons who have been at odds with one another are brought together, they have peace or reconciliation.

Jesus said, ‘**Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid,**’ **John 14:27.** Notice in this statement, Jesus refers to **two types of peace,** the peace the world gives and the peace that He gives. The world seeks for peace, but what is meant is they seek for the absence of hostility, no enmity.

The peace that Jesus promises isn't necessarily the absence of hostility, it is as Paul describes, **'the peace of God, which passes all understanding,'** **Philippians 4:7**. The Christians in **Philippi** very much understood this peace because they saw it demonstrated in Paul and Silas when the Gospel was first preached in the city of **Philippi**. Paul and Silas were beaten and cast into prison.

Did they enjoy the world's peace, the absence of hostility? Of course not, they had been beaten. **Did they enjoy the peace of Christ?** Yes, and that peace was demonstrated in their praying and singing praises unto God. **Acts 16:22-25**.

Christ's peace is tranquillity of mind, but it is more than just that. It is having peace with God. By **'peace with God,'** we mean harmony or reconciliation with God. In fact, the **second type of peace**, tranquillity of mind, stems from the **third type of peace**, reconciliation that is, being reconciled unto God.

The demonstration of such **reconciliation** is what **'passes understanding.'** When a person obtains reconciliation or peace with God, he or she will have peace or tranquillity of mind, the peace that passes understanding.

From an earthly standpoint, what Paul and Silas did while in the Philippian jail rises above our thoughts. It doesn't make earthly sense to rejoice in suffering, but this is what Paul and Silas did, and this is what Peter exhorts us to do. **'But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.'** **1 Peter 4:13**.

How can I have the peace Jesus promised? The short answer is by being reconciled to God. We are reconciled by or through the blood of the cross of Jesus, **Colossians 1:20-22 / Ephesians 2:13-16**.

We come into contact with the cleansing blood of Christ when we are obedient to the Gospel plan of salvation by believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, **John 8:24**, confessing that faith, **Romans 10:9+10**, repenting of our sins, **Luke 13:3+5**, and being baptised into His death, **Romans 6:3-5**.

Reconciliation, however, is more than just obedience to the Gospel. We must emulate the **'God of Peace'** and the **'Prince of Peace'**. Paul wrote, **'Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you,'** **2 Corinthians 13:11**.

We must also follow **'the Gospel of peace'**, **Romans 10:15 / Ephesians 6:15** and live in the peaceable kingdom of the Lord. Let us, therefore, **'seek peace, and pursue it,'** **1 Peter 3:11** so **'the God of peace'** will be with us. **Romans 15:33**.

Long-suffering

A **fourth characteristic** of the fruit of the Spirit is longsuffering. Some have defined the term as **'long on suffering.'** Certainly, this is an easy way to remember the basic concept. A couple of synonyms of **'longsuffering'** are forbearance and patience.

W.E. Vine wrote, **'Longsuffering is that quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate or promptly punish; it is the opposite of anger, and is associated with mercy.'** Further, the concept carries with it the idea of the **'patient enduring of evil'** and the **'slowness of avenging injuries'**.

As **Vine** pointed out, longsuffering is the opposite of anger. Remember in context Paul is contrasting **'the fruit of the Spirit'** with **'the works of the flesh.'** This contrast is readily seen in longsuffering. Antonyms of longsuffering are **'hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, and strife'** all **'works of the flesh'**. **Galatians 5:19-21**.

'Hatred' is enmity, while **'discord'** is strife and contention. **'Jealousy'** is indignation, and **'fits of rage'** is fierceness or outbursts of anger. All are in contrast to and opposite of longsuffering. In other words, and in application, a person doesn't portray longsuffering while holding a grudge, being contentious, or exploding in anger.

Longsuffering is an attribute of God. David, the Psalmist wrote, **'But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.'** **Psalm 86:15**. We can all be thankful that because of God's compassion and graciousness, He is forbearing and patient with us. While we deserve death because of our sin and rebellion, He is longsuffering.

Peter wrote, ‘The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance’. 2 Peter 3:9. God isn’t indifferent about His promise of the second coming and judgment. The reason for His apparent delay is His longsuffering. God isn’t willing that any should be lost.

He desires ‘all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.’ 1 Timothy 2:4. He gives mankind opportunity and time in order for all men to come to Him in repentance. Knowing the hard-heartedness of man, it is little wonder that Peter later wrote, ‘the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation’. 2 Peter 3:15.

Noah serves as an example of the longsuffering of the Lord. Peter wrote, ‘to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water.’ 1 Peter 3:20.

Just as God is longsuffering with us, He was longsuffering with Noah’s contemporaries and gave them opportunity to repent. Sadly, they didn’t, and when judgment came, only eight souls were saved! What a sad commentary on that generation.

Could this be said of our generation? One day, God will send forth His Son and ‘Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned.’ John 5:28+29.

God is longsuffering towards us, but His longsuffering and patience will come to an end, and judgment day will be upon us. When that great and notable day comes, where will you spend eternity? Today is the day to prepare! So, be prepared. Judgment day is coming!

In the parable of the unjust judge, Jesus taught among other principles the longsuffering of God, Luke 18:1-8. In this parable, a wicked judge eventually grants the petition of a widow who continually petitioned him. But in contrast Jesus says God is not like that, God grants petitions but you don’t have to badger God over and over again with your petitions.

If the unjust judge will grant the petition of a persistent widow, how much more will God, the righteous Judge, grant to His own faithful servants who don’t have to continually ask Him for something?

Concerning longsuffering, Jesus said, ‘And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?’ Luke 18:7. The word translated ‘bear long’ is the same original word and is usually translated ‘longsuffering’. We, like the persistent widow, continually make requests of God but oftentimes, we make requests over and over and over again but this isn’t necessary.

Many times, it’s not because we don’t believe God will grant our prayers, but because of our own weaknesses and needs, we badger God continually. In spite of such weaknesses, in spite of our failings, in spite of our lack of faith, God is longsuffering with us and grants our continual petitions.

In the midst of exposing the sin and hypocrisy of the Jews, Paul gives a ray of hope. He wrote, ‘Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?’ Romans 2:4.

Throughout their history, the Jews saw and experienced the goodness of God, but they continually rejected Him. Nonetheless, God was forbearing and longsuffering with them desiring their repentance.

Like so many people, they were anxious to receive God’s goodness, but they refused to be led down the road of repentance. All men have seen the riches of God’s goodness. ‘Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.’ James 1:17.

Those good and perfect gifts should lead all men to repentance, but sadly too many are like the Jews of old and reject the riches of God’s goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering.

Since longsuffering is an attribute of God, then we also know that Christ is longsuffering. In 1 Timothy 1:16, Paul wrote, ‘But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.’

When Paul was persecuting the church, when Paul was victimising Christians, when Paul was rejecting the truth, Jesus was provoked, but He restrained Himself showing longsuffering towards Paul.

The same could be said of us! **‘But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.’** Romans 5:8. **‘While we were yet sinners,’** while we transgressed God’s law, 1 John 3:4, while we knew to do good but didn’t, James 4:17, while we violated our own consciences, Romans 14:23, while we lived in unrighteousness, 1 John 5:17, Christ was longsuffering towards us.

We deserved death, separation from God, but instead **‘Christ died for us.’** **‘See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!’** 1 John 3:1.

Since God and Christ are longsuffering, it is only natural that their servants be longsuffering. To the church at Ephesus, Paul wrote, **‘As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.’** Ephesians 4:1+2. The quality of longsuffering has its foundation in love.

Paul further wrote, **‘Love is patient.’** 1 Corinthians 13:4. In other words, love is longsuffering. It keeps on suffering long. It keeps on being long-enduring. It keeps on exercising patience, forbearance, and perseverance.

‘Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.’ 1 John 4:11. If God so loved us that He is longsuffering with us, we ought also to love one another in the same way and be longsuffering with one another.

With this application, consider Colossians 3:12+13 **‘Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.’**

God and Jesus are our examples of longsuffering. The Holy Spirit tells us through the Word He inspired to be longsuffering. Let us, therefore, put on longsuffering. Let us be longsuffering towards one another and towards the world. Let us have this, another characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit.

Gentleness

The fruit of the Spirit has many attributes. Just as an orange has attributes like round, orange, and sweet, the fruit of the Spirit has the attributes of **‘love, joy, peace’**. By inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul gave the **fifth attribute** of the fruit of the Spirit, **‘gentleness’**.

The word **‘gentleness’** comes from the Greek word **‘chrestotes’** and means goodness of the heart or kindness. It is normally associated with moral goodness. It carries with it the idea of a **‘kindly disposition’** and is more often translated **‘goodness’** and **‘kindness’** in the **King James Version**. Thus, this attribute is always sweet, kind, and full of graciousness.

In the **Sermon on the Mount**, Jesus said, **‘Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.’** Matthew 5:48. As Christians we are to imitate God, the Father. Thus, Jesus’ statement is brought home in application when we consider God’s goodness.

Paul wrote, **‘Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?’** Romans 2:4. The word **‘goodness’** is the same as **‘gentleness’** in the original language. God is rich in goodness!

‘Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights.’ James 1:17, and **‘in him we live, and move, and have our being.’** Acts 17:28. God is so good to us that **‘while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us’**. Romans 5:8. If we have the mind-set to imitate God and live godly, then we will also be rich in goodness, gentleness.

Please notice the application Paul makes in **Romans 2:2-4**. God’s goodness ought to lead us to repentance! Generally, when tragedy hits, we turn to God, or, in the least, it causes us to think about our soul’s destiny. It is an illness, an accident, or a death of a loved one that causes us to consider more seriously our eternal fate.

But God's goodness ought to do the same. His kindness shown by His supply of our daily welfare, His spiritual provisions given to us through His word, His generous care as He watches over the affairs of this world, these things ought to impel us to live as God would have us to live.

One aspect of the goodness of God emphasised in Scripture is the goodness God has shown toward us through Jesus Christ. In **Ephesians 2:7**, Paul wrote, **'That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.'** It's through the kindness that God has shown to us through Jesus, the Christ that we will be able to praise God throughout eternity.

Again, the word **'kindness'** in this text is the same as in **Galatians 5:22**. Paul also makes this thought clear in **Titus 3:4**. After reminding us what we were, he wrote, **'But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared.'** Here's the point, God showed His kindness and love toward mankind in the sending of His Son, Jesus Christ, to this world of woe and in the sacrifice and death of His Son for our sins.

Notice, also, God's goodness and severity is contrasted. Again, to the Christians in Rome, Paul wrote, **'consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off.'** **Romans 11:22.**

The severity of God fell upon the unbelieving Jews while the goodness of God was shown toward the Gentiles because of their faith. The conditional nature of salvation is under consideration.

As long as the Gentiles continued in faithfulness, they would see the goodness of God, but if they became unfaithful like the Jews, they would be cut off.

The same could be said of us. Jesus **'became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.'** **Hebrew 5:9.** Our salvation is contingent upon our obedience to Jesus. As long as we obey, we have salvation, but when we quit obeying, we no longer have salvation.

Sadly, this was the state of affairs in **Galatia**. Rather than living for Jesus, some Galatian Christians turned back to the old law, and Paul assessed they were **'fallen from grace'**, **Galatians 5:4**. Let us determine not to follow their example but be as John exhorted, **'faithful unto death'** so that we may receive **'a crown of life'**. **Revelation 2:10.**

Another application of this verse that needs to be made concerns the way we look at God. Our view of God must be a balance between His goodness and His severity. To consider one more than the other or one above the other leaves us with a perverted view of the Almighty.

If we only believe in the goodness of God, we are led to conclude that God will overlook all our faults no matter if we have made any attempt to change or live as He instructs.

On the other hand, if we can only see the severity of God, then we are led to believe that God is some destructive Creator who has created us to be condemned. Both goodness and severity are characteristics of God. We can see the goodness of God in all that He has done for us, but we ought also to understand that those who will not obey God will see His severity.

Justice, equity, and righteousness demands such. It's not fair, it's not just, and it's not righteous to reward both the obedient and the disobedient with the eternal glories of heaven. Because of God's goodness and severity, **'they that have done good,'** will be raised **'unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.'** **John 5:29.**

Not only is **'gentleness'** a characteristic of God, Jesus' life was characterised by it. Certainly, we hear the kind and gentle voice of Jesus when he said, **'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.'** **Matthew 11:28-30.**

And we can see the goodness of the Lord as He received sinners, **Luke 7:37-50 / John 8:1-11**. Because of Christ's example of gentleness, Paul writing to the Christians in Corinth wrote, **'Such people should realise that what we are in our letters when we are absent, we will be in our actions when we are present.'** **2 Corinthians 10:1.**

Paul recognised the example of Jesus. So even though he was accused of being bold while not in their presence, he wrote with all gentleness, the gentleness of Christ. What a tremendous example for us! Even in the face of opposition, Paul acted with gentleness just as the Lord had done.

There are many facets of life in which we need to show gentleness, goodness, and kindness. The tongue is one such area. As we go into the world to evangelise, we need to show kindness. Paul wrote, **‘Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.’** Colossians 4:6. Wise Solomon of old wrote, **‘Pleasant words are as a honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones’.** Proverbs 16:24.

Not only should we show kindness in our **words**, we ought to show it in our **actions**. The Samaritan is a marvellous example, **Luke 10:30-37**. Jesus testified that he was a neighbour to the man that fell among the thieves, and then He made this application, **‘Go, and do likewise.’**

Also, **what was the difference between the sheep and goats of Matthew 25:31-46?** The sheep did acts of kindness! They clothed the naked, visited the sick, and fed the hungry while the goats did nothing. Let us, therefore, be kind one to another. **Ephesians 4:32**.

Each morning as we get up from bed, one of the first things we do is put on our clothes. Just as we put on clothes, Paul exhorts us to put on some attributes and virtues. Among them is kindness.

To the Christians in **Colossae** he wrote, **‘Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.’** Colossians 3:12+13.

Goodness

The next description or **sixth attribute** of the fruit of the Spirit is **‘goodness’**. In the original language, goodness is a **moral quality**. It is uprightness of heart and life. Goodness is very closely associated with gentleness. Gentleness describes the kindlier quality of goodness whereas goodness describes the sterner or disciplined aspect.

Sometimes goodness is shown by gentleness, but on other occasions, it is shown by discipline. Therefore, goodness stems from a zeal for the truth which rebukes, corrects, and chastises. To illustrate this definition, consider Jesus as He cleanses the temple.

In **John 2:13-17**, we read that on the Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem **‘and found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting.’** Consequently, He made a scourge, drove them out, poured out their money, and overturned their tables.

Upon seeing this, His disciples remembered **Psalm 69:9** which says, **‘for zeal for your house consumes me, and the insults of those who insult you fall on me.’** Because of a zeal for God, Christ in all goodness corrected the situation in the temple.

Now remember that the Jews had to take their own animal sacrifice from their own homes, **Exodus 12:5+6**, but what was happening was the money merchants were selling animals at the temple which were blemished to the people coming in. In other words the sacrifices weren’t personal sacrifices any more, it was more of a convenient store.

Also, consider the denouncing of the Scribes and Pharisees in **Matthew 23:13-19**. In the **Sermon on the Mount**, Jesus said, **‘For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.’** Matthew 5:20. To follow after the Scribes and Pharisees was and is a very serious matter for their ways will lead one to destruction.

Jesus, on the other hand, desires **‘all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.’** 1 Timothy 2:4 as clearly revealed by the fact that He willingly gave Himself on the cross. Thus, because of Jesus’ zeal for truth and true righteousness, and His desire of salvation for all men, He warned, **‘Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!’** Mathew 23:13.

A final illustration to help in our understanding of **‘goodness’** is found in **Hebrews 12:6**, **‘the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.’** Generally, we think about love and goodness in terms

of gentleness. However, love and goodness ought also to be thought of as discipline. We as parents should understand this.

Why does the mother slap the hand of the child reaching to the top of the stove? Because she loves that child and doesn't want any harm to come to him or her. **Is this goodness?** Of course it is! **Why does God discipline or chastened His children?** Because **'it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.'** Hebrews 12:11. This is God's goodness in action.

Although other forms of this word is used numerous times in Scripture, the noun form as used in **Galatians 5:22** is only used **four times**.

a. **Romans 15:14** 'I myself am convinced, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with knowledge and competent to instruct one another.'

b. **Ephesians 5:9** '(for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth).'

c. **2 Thessalonians 1:11** 'With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith.'

In adjective form, this word describes being good in character and is beneficial in effect. When the rich young ruler came to Jesus, he addressed Him as, **'Good Master'** or **'Good Teacher,'** **Mark 10:17**. Coupled with the fact of his kneeling before Jesus, he was saying Jesus was good in character and beneficial in effect as a teacher.

In reply, Jesus pointedly asked, **'Why do you call me good?'** Jesus answered. **'No one is good—except God alone'.** **Mark 10:18**. The point Jesus made was this, by referring to Him as **'good,'** the rich young ruler was acknowledging His divine nature.

However, there is another side to this account. The rich young ruler was obviously conceited about his own goodness. When Jesus told him to **'keep the commandments,'** **Matthew 19:17**, he said, **'Master, all these have I observed from my youth,'** **Mark 10:20**.

Once again, the good character of Jesus is displayed. **'Jesus looked at him and loved him. 'One thing you lack,'** he said. **'Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.'** **Mark 10:21**.

In kindness, Jesus invited him to be a disciple, but in goodness, Jesus was stern and candidly pointed out his lacking. As in the fruit of the Spirit, both qualities stem from love. Because of His love, Jesus was direct with the rich young ruler, and in so doing, He convicted him that he was really not as good as he thought. Sadly, instead of repenting, the young man went away grieved.

The opposite of goodness is evil or bad. Concerning the children of promise, Isaac and Jacob, Paul wrote in **Romans 9:11**, **'Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand.'** The action of Isaac and Jacob, whether good or evil, didn't influence God's choice.

God's providential plan to bless all the nations of the earth was through Abraham's and Isaac's seed. Isaac was blessed over Ishmael and Jacob over Esau not because they were good or bad, but because they were children of promise. Thus, through the seed of Isaac and Jacob, Christ, we, too, are children of promise.

Also, in **2 Corinthians 5:10**, Paul writes, **'For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.'** Remember this verse is talking about judgement for the service of the Christian, it's not talking about salvation.

In the original language, the word **'bad'** in this verse and the word **'evil'** in **Romans 9:11** are the same. It means base, wrong, or wicked and refers to a person or thing that lack those qualities they ought to possess whether in action or thoughts.

Similarly, Jesus said, ‘Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned.’ John 5:28+29.

Those who are characterised by the fruit of the Spirit, ‘goodness’, will be rewarded with eternal life, and those who do evil will be rewarded with death, ‘eternal separation from God’ and damnation.

What does it mean to do good? Can a person simply do acts of kindnesses and expect to inherit eternal life? The answer is NO! Remember Jesus said, ‘there is none good but one, that is, God’ Mark 10:18. ‘For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,’ Romans 3:23. Doing good doesn’t take away or ‘balance the scale’ concerning sin.

Instead, the perfect blood of Christ was shed to take away sins, Matthew 26:28 / Ephesians 1:7. Therefore to have forgiveness, one must come into contact with His blood which is a true act of goodness on man’s part. In order to come into contact with the blood of Christ, one must obey the Gospel. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.

Faithfulness

‘Faithfulness’ is the seventh attribute of the fruit of the Spirit. Along with ‘love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, and goodness’, there is ‘faith’, all describing the singular fruit of the Spirit. Though faith should not be emphasised above the other characteristics, it’s a vital and crucial topic because without faith it is impossible to please God, Hebrews 11:6.

However, in order to please God, we must have the right kind of faith. Not just any faith pleases God nor is this characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit.

Within the pages of the Bible, there are basically two kinds of faith, dead faith which is the faith of devils and saving faith. The faith of devils is mere belief or knowledge of facts. James says, ‘You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.’ James 2:19.

The devils have knowledge of who God is and who God’s Son is. They also know and believe Jesus died for the sins of the world, but this is as far as their faith goes. They don’t have saving faith, and, therefore, they tremble in fear of God and His judgment.

Saving faith is belief coupled with obedience of acts of faith. When Paul was in Philippi, he and Silas were beaten and imprisoned. After the miracle of the earthquake, the jailhouse doors were opened, and ‘everyone’s chains were broken,’ the Jailer asked, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ Acts 16:19-30. Paul answered, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.’ Acts 16:31.

Was Paul commanding them to merely believe? I think not. Why? Because of the following verses.

In Acts 16:32, the text goes on to say, ‘Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house.’ Because ‘Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message,’ Romans 10:17, their faith was being increased by the word spoken to them.

Then Acts 16:33 says, ‘At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptised.’

Why did the Jailer and his family wash their stripes? Because they were repenting of their sin of beating Paul and Silas. By washing their stripes, they were helping the healing process, and thus correcting their sin as much as humanly possible. Also notice in this verse, they were baptised.

Finally, in Acts 16:34, we find them rejoicing. Why? Because their sins were washed away. At the point of mere belief? No, after they heard the word, repented, and were baptised. Finally, notice the summary Luke gives by inspiration, ‘believing in God with all his house.’ Acts 16:34. Luke summarizes all that they did in the word ‘believing.’ Thus, we see saving faith includes acts of obedience.

For this reason, James says.

James 2:18 ‘But someone will say, ‘you have faith; I have deeds.’ Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds.’

James 2:20 ‘You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?’

James 2:22 ‘You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.’

James 2:24 ‘You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.’

James 2:26 ‘As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.’

Therefore, without obedient, **saving faith** it is impossible to please God.

Now that we understand there are **two kinds of faith**, **what is faith?** Some would point to **Hebrews 11:1** for a definition of faith. However, this is more of a description of faith than a definition. **Hebrews 11:1** says, ‘**Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.**’

From this verse we learn some more qualities of faith. Within faith, there is substance or a quality of confidence which helps a person to endure, and there is evidence which is proof. It is not some ‘**leap in the dark**’ but has its foundation in proof.

So, what is faith? The actual definition of faith is ‘**firm persuasion**’ or ‘**firm conviction based upon being persuaded.**’ However, it is used **three basic ways** within Scripture.

1. The word **faith** is used of ‘**trust**’.

In **1 Corinthians 2:5**, Paul wrote, ‘**That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.**’ Paul was speaking about trust. We should not put our trust in man’s wisdom but in the power of God. The Jews of old trusted in their own wisdom, and God lead them into captivity.

Today, rather than trusting God and preaching His Word, many draw disciples after them by the wisdom of man with good words and fair speeches, **Romans 16:18**. Let us grow in faith by trusting God and taking Him at His word.

2. The word **faith** is used of ‘**trustworthiness**’. Paul wrote in **Titus 2:10**, ‘**to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Saviour attractive.**’ The word translated ‘**fully trusted**’ in this verse could have been translated ‘**faith.**’ It is the same Greek word.

To show ‘**full trust**’ is to show one’s trustworthiness, dependability, or reliability. This is probably the specific characteristic Paul is describing in the fruit of the Spirit. When the Bible talks about the faithfulness of God, **Deuteronomy 7:9 / 1 Corinthians 1:9 / 1 Corinthians 10:13**, it is this characteristic.

When we read of those who are ‘**faithful in Christ Jesus,**’ **Ephesians 1:1 / Colossians 1:2**, again it is this characteristic. Please notice this application, in order to be faithful in Christ Jesus, one must have full trust. His or her life must be characterised by trustworthiness and dependability to God, His Word, and His people.

3. The word **faith** is used in reference to a scheme of ‘**belief**’. By inspiration, this is generally designated as ‘**the faith**’ and refers to the Holy Scriptures by which we grow in faith, **Romans 10:17**.

Luke records, ‘**And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith,**’ **Acts 6:7**. They were obedient to a scheme of belief or system of faith. Nearing the end of his life, Paul wrote, ‘**I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.**’ **2 Timothy 4:7**.

Again, Paul kept a system of belief, the Word of God. Finally, Jude wrote we ‘**should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints,**’ **Jude 3**. Similarly, Paul said, ‘**I am set for the defence of the gospel,**’ **Philippians 1:17**. To defend the Gospel and to earnestly contend for the faith is the same concept.

Notice further, Jude said, the faith ‘**was once delivered unto the saints**’ or ‘**once for all delivered**’. The Bible is the complete revelation of God. There is no place and no need for further revelation for God has given ‘**unto us all**

things that pertain unto life and godliness'. 2 Peter 1:3.

Faith isn't some subjective leap in the dark. It's concrete and objective. It has its foundation in the Word of God. Since without faith it is impossible to please God, **Hebrews 11:6**, let us determine now to grow in faith. **How?** By reading and studying God's eternal word for **'faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.'** **Romans 10:17**.

Let's do more than just maintain this marvellous attribute of the fruit of the Spirit, let's grow in faith so that we will not have **'little faith'**, **Matthew 6:30** but will have **'great faith'** as the centurion, **Matthew 8:10** and the woman of Canaan, **Matthew 15:28**.

And let us be like Abraham, the father of the faithful, who was **'not weak in faith'** but **'was strong in faith,'** **Romans 4:18+19**. Therefore, like the apostles, we plead unto the Lord, **'Increase our faith'**. **Luke 17:5**.

Meekness

The fruit of the Spirit is the produce the Spirit yields in the heart of men. By the Spirit's influence through the Spirit inspired Word, man is instructed in such characteristics as **'love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,'** and **meekness,** **Galatians 5:22-23**.

In this part of our study, we are concerned with **'meekness'**, the **eighth characteristic** of the fruit of the Spirit. Like the other qualities of the fruit of the Spirit, meekness mustn't be disregarded as being unimportant.

Jesus taught this God admired virtue in the **third beatitude** of the **Sermon on the Mount**, **'blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth,'** **Matthew 5:5**.

Paul informed the young evangelist Timothy to flee covetousness **'and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness,'** **1 Timothy 6:11**. Rather than adorning themselves with fancy hair-do's, gold, and costly attire, Peter instructs ladies to adorn themselves with **'the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit,'** **1 Peter 3:4**. Thus, we see the importance of meekness.

What is meekness? Meekness is a virtue describing an inner quality of a person. It isn't necessarily an outward quality though such temperaments express themselves by outward actions. Meekness carries with it the idea of self-abasement and is the opposite of self-assertiveness and self-willed. Meekness also implies submission. To be truly meek, one must be submissive.

Jesus expressed this thought in **John 10:27**, **'My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.'** In our culture, meekness is often portrayed as weakness and is sometimes characterised by a person who is unable to help himself.

However, Jesus is meek, but as God, He is infinitely powerful. The Greeks considered animals that were tamed as meek. The animals still had all their strength, but being tamed, their strength was under control, disciplined, and gentle. Meekness is often associated with humility.

In fact, they are so closely related only the humble heart can possess meekness. In Jesus' invitation, notice how He joins these two qualities. He said, **'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.'** **Matthew 11:28+29**. Because Jesus is meek and lowly in heart, Christian ought to be the same.

Thus, these two virtues are again connected in **Ephesians 4:2** which says, **'with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love.'** Finally, notice the connection in **Colossians 3:12**. Paul, writing to the church at Colossae, said, **'Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.'** **Colossians 3:12**. Thus, in each of these instances, we see this close alliance between meekness and humility.

Meekness begins with a proper attitude towards self. As we stand in the presence of the almighty God, **how do we view ourselves? Are we or, at least, should we be humbled by His greatness?** Meekness is void of pride. Because of our sinfulness, we have nothing of which to boast or flaunt. Therefore, James wrote, **'But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: 'God opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble.'** **James 4:6**.

Meekness continues with a proper attitude towards others. The meek are gentle, mild, and lowly. For this reason, the meek don't demand their own rights. **Isn't this what Paul wrote about concerning meats sacrificed to idols and a brother's weak conscience? Romans 14:13-23.**

There is nothing intrinsically wrong with eating such meats, but because it may cause a brother to stumble, we ought to refrain. Rather than demanding our rights, in meekness, we abstain. Meekness also is involved in our teaching and encouragement of others.

Consider the following passages in this light.

Galatians 6:1 'Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.'

2 Timothy 2:24+25 'And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth.'

1 Peter 3:15 'But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.'

Though there are times when it is necessary, none of us like to be severely reprimanded. With all the problems in the church at Corinth, Paul approached them **'in love, and in the spirit of meekness,' 1 Corinthians 4:21** and **'by the meekness and gentleness of Christ', 2 Corinthians 10:1**. Let's, therefore, be followers of Paul and humbly seek to instruct and correct one another in the spirit of meekness.

Meekness ultimately culminates in a proper attitude towards God. This is the attitude of Jesus when He declared, **'For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me'. John 6:38**. Also, this attitude is displayed in His prayer on the **Mount of Olives, 'Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done', Luke 22:42**.

Today, all of God's will for all mankind is declared in His inspired Word, the Bible, **2 Timothy 3:16+17 / 2 Peter 1:3**.

How do we approach the Bible? Do we approach it like Jesus approached the will of the Father without dispute, resistance, and murmuring? With these thoughts, consider the exhortation of James, **'Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.'** James 1:21.

There are many good examples of meekness within Scripture. In **Genesis 13:8+9**, a dissension arose between Abraham's herdsmen and Lot's. **Abraham**, however, didn't want strife to come between him and his nephew, and in meekness, he gave Lot who was younger the first choice of where to feed his herds and take his family. Abraham didn't demand his rights of being the elder, but with meekness and without complaint, allowed Lot to take the better land.

Moses is another powerful example. The first time the word **'meek'** is used in the Bible concerns this great man of faith. **Number 12:3** says, **'Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.'** He was meek because he humbled himself and submitted to the will of God.

Even though he saw himself unable to speak, in meekness he obeyed God and led the children of Israel out of bondage. As the writer of **Hebrews** records, he saw the wealth of Egypt, and what it meant to be the son of Pharaoh's daughter, yet in meekness he chose the reproach of Christ. **Hebrews 11:24-26**.

Finally, consider the example of **Jeremiah**. He spoke the truth as it was a burning fire shut up in his bones, **Jeremiah 20:9**. Other prophets of his day were speaking smooth things, **Jeremiah 30:10**, but Jeremiah preached the word of God.

He became unpopular, isolated, and suffered because of his stand for the truth. Still, in meekness and submission to God, he kept on preaching and teaching the truth. Yes, he was discouraged, but no, he didn't quit but continued to meekly serve God.

One characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit is ‘meekness’. If someone was describing your characteristics, would they include meekness? All of us can grow in this tremendous virtue. So, let us cultivate a spirit of meekness. ‘Seek the LORD, all you humble of the land, you who do what he commands. Seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you will be sheltered on the day of the LORD’s anger’. Zephaniah 2:3.

Temperance

Remember the fruit of the Spirit is the singular fruit produced by living according to the Spirit’s inspired instructions, the Bible. This singular fruit is characterised by ‘love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance’. These aren’t separate or different fruits but are varying qualities of the same fruit. The ninth and final quality of the fruit of the Spirit found in Galatians 5 is ‘temperance.’

‘Temperance’ is self-control. In the original language, it literally means ‘in strength,’ that is, in the realm or in the sphere of strength. It describes the virtue of a person who masters his or her desires and passions. In writing to the Corinthians, Paul describes the temperance a person must have in order to win a race.

Listen to the words of Paul. In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 he writes, ‘Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore, I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.’

Truly Christians are in a race, and God intends for us to be winners. In order to win, we must have temperance. Notice some lessons on temperance from this text.

1. Christians must ‘run to win’. Paul wrote, ‘Run in such a way as to get the prize.’

This is a winning attitude or disposition of mind. Attitude often determines the difference between winning and losing. An ‘I can’t’ attitude never could. Here is the point, Christians need to be in control of their thoughts in order to obtain an incorruptible crown.

Wise Solomon wrote, ‘For as he thinks in his heart, so is he’, Proverbs 23:7. Everything a person does goes back to a heart action, Matthew 15:17-19. If a person controls his heart, the way he thinks, then he will also be in control of his body.

For this reason, we can see why David wrote a man is blessed when ‘whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night.’ Psalm 1:2. And why Jesus said, ‘blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God’. Matthew 5:8.

In Philippians 4:8, Paul gave a prescription for good mental health. He wrote, ‘Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.’

In order to think about such things, a person must control his thoughts. We mustn’t allow ourselves to think about falsehoods, dishonourable things, unrighteousness, impurity, things associated with hatred, and wicked reports. If we will allow such thoughts, they could consume our lives and make us bitter.

But if we think about things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, we will have ‘the peace of God, which passes all understanding.’ Philippians 4:7.

A part of disciplining one’s mind is knowing the mark and staying focused upon it. What are our desires in life? Is it material goods or is it heaven? If we desire the incorruptible crown, then heaven must be our goal. Now that we know the mark, then let’s stay focused upon it. Rather than allowing ourselves to be distracted by the material, physical world, let’s stay focused upon the heavenly reward.

Rather than being a double minded man who is unstable in all his ways, James 1:8, let’s fix our eyes upon the crown of life, 2 Corinthians 4:18. Let’s be like Moses who had respect unto the recompense of reward and chose Him who is invisible over the treasures of Egypt, Hebrews 11:23-27.

Though men may try, but the fact remains **‘You cannot serve both God and money,’ Matthew 6:24.** Therefore, discipline your mind and stay focused upon the heavenly reward.

2. Christians must discipline their bodies and bring them into subjection in order **‘to obtain an incorruptible crown,’ 1 Corinthians 9:27.** Rather than being a slave to the body, we must make our bodies servants for the Master. Our bodies were given to us to serve God.

‘Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness.’ Romans 6:12+13.

In order to accomplish this, we must deny ourselves, take up the cross of Christ, and follow Jesus, **Matthew 16:24.** Obviously, this isn’t an easy task. In fact, to allow another to have control over us is against man’s natural way of thinking, but if we desire to have life, we must bring our bodies into subjection.

A major part of buffeting our bodies is controlling our tongues. This is a major theme in the **third chapter of James.** He wrote that if a man is able to control this **‘unruly evil’ James 3:8,** the tongue, he **‘is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body’ James 3:2.**

Solomon wrote, **‘Those who guard their mouths and their tongues keep themselves from calamity.’ Proverbs 21:23.** It almost goes without saying that many of us have brought upon ourselves a wide variety of problems because we did not **‘bite our tongues.’**

Not only is **‘temperance’** a quality of the fruit of the Spirit, it is also listed among the qualities of fruitfulness in **2 Peter 1:6.** These qualities are built one upon another. Peter begins with faith. Faith is the most fundamental, and we build upon faith with virtue, upon virtue with knowledge, then with temperance, then patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and upon brotherly kindness with love. **2 Peter 1:5-7.**

Since they build one upon another, then we can understand more about any one of these qualities by the preceding and succeeding qualities. Since temperance is built upon knowledge, then something must be learned before a person can be temperate, and temperance is putting into practice what we have already learned.

Furthermore, patience, **‘endurance’** results from temperance. Only until we learn temperance, will we learn true patience.

When Paul taught Felix concerning faith in Christ, **‘he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come,’ Acts 24:25.** Notice temperance came after righteousness and judgment after temperance. Righteousness is God’s gift to mankind. Through the blood of Christ and our obedience to the Gospel, we are justified and made righteous. Temperance is man’s response to the righteousness of God.

It’s self-control in remaining or abiding in righteous living. Judgment is bringing into accountability righteousness and temperance. **How did we respond to the righteousness of God? Did we live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world?** Our acceptance of the righteousness of God and our temperate abiding in righteousness will be brought into accountability, judgment.

By controlling our minds and bodies, we will be temperate in all things and will obtain that incorruptible crown. The incorruptible crown is a victory crown that will not decay nor perish. It will last forever!

‘Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.’ Hebrews 12:1+2.

The fruit of the Spirit is made up of qualities to which all men should aspire. They are qualities that need no law, need no regulation, and need no restraint. They are godly qualities that issue from the foundational principle of love for God and for His creation. If these qualities are applied properly to our lives, they will build a good relationship with God, with family, and with friends.

Every godly person of the past was characterised by them, and every godly person of future will be characterised by them. Let us, therefore, strive in earnestness to possess the fruit of the Spirit which is ‘love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, righteousness, and truth’.

Filled with the Holy Spirit

How can I be filled with the Holy Spirit? When you read of the spiritual vibrancy in the life of the early church do you wonder, **why is my life not like that? How can I live under the Spirit’s influence?** Conversion to Christ is something amazing. We receive the gracious gift of forgiveness and the Holy Spirit as a gift from God.

It is the Holy Spirit who then identifies us as God’s children and is the deposit guaranteeing our future inheritance in heaven. Without the Holy Spirit, we cannot belong to God. His is an essential ministry to all God’s people. **Acts 2:38 / Galatians 3:14 / Ephesians 1:13+14 / Romans 8:9.**

Though every believer has been given the Holy Spirit, not every believer lives a Spirit-filled life. The instruction to ‘**be filled with the Spirit**’, **Ephesians 5:18** was written to those who already had received the Holy Spirit. Now, however, they were being instructed to display the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Several points need to be noted.

1. The instruction to be filled with the Spirit isn’t optional, it’s not something we can take or leave. It is imperative!
2. Unlike our conversion, which is unrepeatable, ‘**we cannot be born again and again and again**’, being filled with the Spirit is a continuous process throughout our lives. We are literally to keep on being filled with the Holy Spirit.
3. Being filled with the Spirit isn’t something that automatically happens to us, it’s something we’re responsible for appropriating as we co-operate with God, who is working in us.

We become filled with the Spirit in the same way one becomes filled with wine, by continually drinking. How this spiritual ‘**drinking**’ is done can be seen in **two examples** given by our Lord. He said, ‘**Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.**’ **Matthew 5:6** **How do we hunger and thirst for righteousness?**

We all experience hunger and thirst and, even when we are exhausted we will not rest until we have satisfied our cravings for food and drink. The point Jesus is making is this, we are to pursue righteousness, the doing of the will of God, with the determination of a person pursuing food and drink.

Only in the holy pursuit of God’s will can we be satisfied. This is why an appetite must be acquired for spiritual things. This is achieved by exposing ourselves to the will of God through our personal reading of his Word, Bible study and prayer.

Satisfying Our Thirst

The Lord discusses the Spirit-filled life in the **Gospel of John**, ‘**On the last and greatest day of the feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, ‘If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.’ By this He meant the Spirit, whom those who believe in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit hadn’t been given, since Jesus hadn’t yet been glorified.’ John 7:37-39.**

Jesus invites the thirsty to come to Him and drink. **But who are the thirsty and how do they drink?** The thirsty are those who desire to live for Jesus, they want His will done in their life. They desire to do the will of God on earth as it is done in heaven.

They come to Jesus to ‘**drink**’ and from within them flows ‘**streams of living water**’. This refers to the power of the Holy Spirit at work in their lives. And though their intake is small, their output is like streams of living water flowing from them. This is the Spirit giving a super-abundant display of His presence in their lives.

We are filled with the Spirit to the extent that we allow the Spirit to influence our lives. We yield to the Spirit’s gentle movement in our heart. We ‘**live by the Spirit**’, we are ‘**led by the Spirit**’, we bear ‘**the fruit of the Spirit**’ and we ‘**keep in step with the Spirit**’. **Galatians 5:16+18+22+23+25.**

When we read what the Spirit wrote, hear what the Spirit says and do what the Spirit reveals, we are being filled with the Spirit. **Revelation 1:11 / Revelation 2:7 / Colossians 3:16.**

The Holy evidence of a Spirit-filled life

How would you know if a person is filled with the Spirit? What would there be about his or her life that would provide confirmation? The answer isn't hard to find.

The early church needed to implement a programme to ensure that the material needs of the saints were being met. **Seven men** were appointed to oversee this work, they were men 'full of the Spirit'. **Acts 6:3+4.** How did the church know which seven to pick? They looked at their manner of life and saw the undeniable evidence of the Spirit's influence in their lives. The Spirit-filled life cannot be concealed.

When you live a Spirit-filled life, 'Christ will dwell in your hearts.' **Ephesians 3:17.** The word 'dwell' refers to a place of permanent abode as opposed to temporary accommodation. Jesus speaks on the same theme, 'If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.' **John 14:23.** The living Christ in our lives is Spirit-filled living.

The Spirit-filled life isn't an ordinary life, it bears all the marks of something extraordinary, something supernatural. It's beyond natural explanation. Every believer should be actively pursuing the Spirit-filled life.

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit

Matthew 12:31+32 'And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.'

Now I don't need to tell you that these are some of the most serious words that ever came from the lips of Jesus Christ. In fact, the more you study this passage, the more terrible it reveals itself to be. It seems that Jesus is indicating a position into which if a man enters his case has become hopeless.

He says, 'It is possible for us to adopt an attitude that makes it impossible for even God to forgive us.' And for that very reason whenever we read this passage, either in the **Gospel of Matthew** or in the other Gospels, we ought to be very careful how we treat it. There are **2 possibilities** with this passage. There are **2 ways** of dealing with it.

1. There is the possibility of reading into the words, something that isn't really there, and making it say something that even Jesus never meant them to say. And
2. It is possible to water it down so much, that you deprive them entirely of their meaning and their terribleness.

I think this subject is an interesting one. And I think it is interesting because some people may think that they have committed the unforgivable sin. And even if you don't think that, at least it's a curious subject. It's mysterious and it's strange and terrible and it's fascinating. It's also a subject, which has caused a great deal of confusion.

Consequently, a great many speculative theories have been put forward about it. Some of the theories have been so confused and so involved they haven't helped anybody, they have only created further uncertainty and difficulty. Surely it has to be possible to know what Jesus meant.

I can't believe God has allowed this passage to be put into His Word by the inspiration of the Spirit and He wants to keep us in the dark about it. Especially with such a serious matter as 'the unforgivable sin' is involved.

To understand the meaning of Jesus we've got to go back to the original setting. Here is a man who is demon possessed, and consequently because of that he is blind and dumb. And he is brought to Jesus and the man is miraculously cured by Jesus.

Now the people standing around are amazed at this demonstration of divine power and they say, 'Could this be the Son of David?' **Matthew 12:23.**

They believe like **Nicodemus** that no man could do these miracles except if God is with him. But the Pharisees as usual tried to discredit Him. They say something that even before the words left their lips they must have known

was not true. They say, 'It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons.' Matthew 12:24.

In other words, they deliberately turned their back on the miracle, a miracle that ought to have convinced that Jesus was the Son of God, because remember that is what the miracles were designed to do. John 20:30+31.

And they say, 'Now this man's not the Son of God, and the power that He manifests isn't God's power either, He works miracles only because He is in league with the devil, the one who really performed that miracle was the devil himself.' Matthew 12:24.

Now this means they not only spoke against Jesus but they spoke against the Holy Spirit by whose power the miracle as performed.

Now remember that Jesus said in Matthew 12:28, 'If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God.' So Jesus claims that this was a demonstration of the Spirit's power through Him. But they blind themselves to that and they not only insult Jesus but by doing that they speak wicked and insulting words against the Holy Spirit Himself.

Now you can see the sin by which these men were guilty. Jesus describes in Matthew 12:31+32 in 2 different ways. He calls it 1st of all, 'Blasphemy against the Spirit' in verse 31. Then in verse 32 He calls it, 'Speaking against the Spirit'.

Now notice that Jesus didn't regard this as an attack against Himself. Of course they were making an attack on Jesus obviously, that was the whole idea in their minds. They spoke against Him when they made this wicked charge.

Jesus interprets what they say as directly against the Holy Spirit and for once in His life, Jesus regarded the attitude of these men to be so terrible that He lowered Himself to reply to them.

Now very often when Jesus was attacked by these people, He just ignored the attack. As the Scriptures say in 1 Peter 2:23, 'When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate.' Jesus wasn't concerned on the whole about defending Himself against attack.

But on this occasion when the Holy Spirit was under attack, Jesus said, 'Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.' Matthew 12:32.

Notice it is 'A sin' against the Holy Spirit. Notice I said, 'A sin' against the Holy Spirit, not 'THE sin' against the Holy Spirit. Because it is one sin, of many possible sins against the Spirit.

And there is something else to notice too. The passage doesn't say that, 'any sin or all sin against the Holy Spirit is unforgivable.' And it doesn't teach us that there is only one sin against the Spirit. After all the New Testament tells us that there are several sins against the Holy Spirit, there are several ways in which we may sin against the Spirit of God.

Hebrews 10:29 we read of the sin of, 'despising the Spirit of grace'. Now that's the sin that the Hebrew Christians were endanger of committing. Remember that the Hebrew letter was written to Jews who had been converted to Christianity but seemed to want to go back to the old Law. They seemed to have the idea that in becoming Christian they had perhaps sacrificed more than they had accepted.

They had a longing for some of the outdated, superseded ceremonies of the Law of Moses. Which really meant that they were looking back when the author had been looking forward. And the writer tells them, if you keep on looking back, there is only one end to that, you're going to end up going back.

And if that happens, if you go back after confessing Jesus, you are committing sin because you're treating the Holy Spirit with disgrace, you're affronting the Holy Spirit. After all, He is the Spirit of grace. He brought you to the light.

He led you to the blessings of Christ and to go back now, will be to insult Him. And every time a Christian turns their back on Jesus Christ and goes back into the world that person is committing the sin of, ‘**despising the Spirit of grace.**’

Again, in **Acts 5**, you have the sin committed by **Ananias and Sapphira**. In **Acts 5:3+9** the sin is described in **2 ways**. It’s described as, ‘**lying to the Spirit and testing the Spirit**’. 1st of all these people try to deceive the apostles, particularly Peter by pretending that a part of the price they received from the sale of piece of land was all of the price.

And Peter points out to them that their sin has really not been a sin against man at all. They have tested or tempted, or tried the Holy Spirit by lying to Him.

Now this sin of lying at this particular moment was certainly for these people, ‘**a sin that leads to death**’, to use the expression **John** uses in **1 John 5:16**. But that’s not necessarily the unforgivable sin. In fact, it’s not even described as the unforgivable sin.

Again in **1 Corinthians 6:19+20** and we discover that certain sins of impurity, certain sins of immorality in Christians are sins against the Holy Spirit. He says, ‘**Do you not know that your body**’. He’s not talking about the church, the body of Christ. He’s talking about your physical body.

He says, ‘**Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honour God with your body.**’

And as a Christian therefore he says that, ‘**The Holy Spirit dwells in you**’. You receive the indwelling presence of the Spirit at your baptism. God’s given the Spirit to all them that obey Him, Peter says in **Acts 5:32**. His presence in your body marks you out as holy, sanctified, set apart for God. And therefore as Christians we should be on our guard against any kind of conduct.

Any habit of personal life that is unclean or harmful or unhealthy to our moral or our mental or our physical health. The particular sin that is described in the passage of course is the sin of immorality. And such a sin says Paul is a sin against the Holy Spirit who lives within you and makes your body the temple of God, because He detests impurity.

Again in **Ephesians 4:30** there is another sin against the Holy Spirit mentioned. ‘**Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God.**’ Now in this passage when you read the context you will discover that Paul is talking about the things that people say. The things that Christians can say, the way we use our tongue.

He is saying, ‘**Look, you have received the Holy Spirit as a token that God intends to redeem you outright one day, therefore watch your tongue, watch your language, watch the things you say, do not cause pain or sorrow but let your words give grace and not offence.**’ And again it relates to purity. Purity of speech and thought.

And then finally and there are others but I am trying to demonstrate the various sins against the Holy Spirit that can be committed. **1 Thessalonians 5:19** Paul says, ‘**Do not put out the Spirit's fire.**’ Or ‘**Do not quench the Spirit.**’ The Holy Spirit is in your life as a Christian. He’s there to prompt you to zeal and to enthusiasm. He’s there to show you how best to serve God.

But when you refuse to act on the promptings of the Holy Spirit in your life. When you refuse to be led to greater service for Him. When you know what to do and you don’t do it. When you know how to be a greater use to God and you refuse to act, then you suffocate the voice of the Holy Spirit in your life.

To an extent that He loses His influence on you. And just as a fire can be put out by water, so you can restrain and dampen down and quench the Spirit of God. And ultimately, if you treat the Holy Spirit like this, He will leave your life. He won’t constantly try to struggle in your life at all, but He will leave you to yourself. And so the later end of you is worse than the beginning. **Matthew 12:45 / 2 Peter 2:20.**

Now all of these are sins that can be committed against the Holy Spirit. And something else notice. They are all sins that are committed by Christians. There’s not one of these that apply to the Non-Christian. They all relate to the believer’s attitude and relationship to the Spirit of God. But you’re not told that any one of these is the ‘**unforgivable sin**’.

Let's be honest, **if any one of these sins was an unforgivable sin, how many of us would be saved? How many of us as Christians who have not at one time or another committed one of the offences that I have just talked about? So these aren't the unforgivable sins.**

Let's look at the way that Jesus describes this particular sin. He calls it in **Matthew 12:31+32, 'Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.'** Now blasphemy is **'evil speaking'**. In that sense you can blaspheme anyone with evil words against them. But in the Bible sense, blasphemy means, **'Evil speaking against deity'**.

It's a very old sin. **Leviticus 24**, we find possibly the earliest mention of **'blasphemy'** in the Bible. And that's the time when Moses had received the Law from God and there is a man there. The son of an Israelite woman who has married an Egyptian, who has said to have blasphemed the name with a cursed.

Now blaspheming the name; is the name of God. And even it seems at that moment that this was such a terrible thing that even Moses was at a loss to know what to do. Nobody had ever behaved like this before certainly not among the people of God. And so Moses goes to God and lays the matter before God and he asks God what to do.

In **Leviticus 24:16** God says, **'Anyone who blasphemes the name of the LORD must be put to death. The entire assembly must stone him. Whether an alien or native-born, when he blasphemes the Name, he must be put to death.'**

Now there is no misunderstanding the penalty of the sin. And throughout the Old Testament, whenever this particular sin of blasphemy against God was committed either by word of mouth or by attitude, this particular sentence was carried out; people were stoned to death for blasphemy.

They even did it during the times of Jesus. Jesus heals a paralysed man and He said, **'Son your sins have been forgiven.'** **Luke 5:20.** And His enemies said in **Luke 5:21, 'This man speaks blasphemy.'** Another time, Jesus said, **'I and my father are one.'** **John 10:30.** And they picked up stones to stone Him. And they said, **'For blasphemy because you being a man, are making yourself equal with God.'** **John 10:33.**

And they were perfectly logical because there are many people today who don't believe that Jesus Christ is God or that He is equal with God. They are much more stupid than the Jews at the time of Jesus because of all their hatred and opposition they raised against Him, they certainly understood the significance of His words.

They recognised that Jesus was indeed claiming to be God. And in their eyes that was blasphemy and they were ready to carry out the sentence of the Law.

Now not all blasphemy is unforgivable. Now Jesus said it, He said in **Matthew 12:31, 'Every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men.'** And again He says in **Matthew 12:32, 'Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven.'** And He's talking about blasphemy.

We have an example of that haven't we? The apostle Paul, he says in **1 Timothy 1:13, 'Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy.'** **Now why?** Because his blasphemy was against the name of Christ and not against the Holy Spirit.

It is true when he attacked the Lord Jesus, he attacked the Holy Spirit too but in his heart. Even when his heart was full of hatred for the Christians, even when he opposed the name of Christ, Paul in a misguided way thought he was serving God. He loved God and he respected the Spirit of God, so he was not in his heart blaspheming the Holy Spirit but the name of Jesus and he received forgiveness.

Now there is theory that says that the unforgivable sin is the sin of **'refusing to believe the Gospel and dying in sin'**. And that's the explanation that is often given as **'the unforgivable sin'**. They say that through the Gospel the Holy Spirit is pleading with men to accept Jesus as Saviour and when they refuse to accept that testimony, they are just like the Pharisees committing the sin of blasphemy, the unforgivable sin.

Well, if that were the case. If the unforgivable sin were the sin of refusing the Gospel of Christ and dying in sin, it couldn't be committed **before** the Day of Pentecost, when the Gospel was first preached. And yet Jesus says to these Pharisees in **Matthew 12:32, 'Anyone who commits this sin will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.'** Jesus isn't saying that, **'This sin has no forgiveness in this life and the life that is yet to come.'**

Everyone knows that when we get to the Day of Judgment, forgiveness for any sin is past. So Jesus isn't talking foolishness. He's saying to the Pharisees. 'Look anybody that commits this particular sin has no forgiveness, here and now, in the age in which you and I live, or in the age which is to come, when the Gospel will be preached.'

And again when you think about. If the unforgivable sin is the sin of refusing the Gospel invitation, rejecting the Gospel. You only have to do that **once** to commit that unforgivable sin. And if we say that to commit this sin a man must refuse the Gospel and go on refusing it until the day that he dies. **What's so startlingly new about that idea?**

And didn't Jesus say much more plainly in **John 8:24**, 'If you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.' Anybody knows that if people persistently refuse the Gospel time and time again and go on refusing it until they die their sins won't be forgiven. But this isn't 'the unforgivable sin' in the sense in which Jesus is talking about it here.

Remember that we are dealing with a sin against the Holy Spirit and not against Jesus. But the failure to obey the Gospel would be no more blasphemy against the Holy Spirit than it would be blasphemy against God or against Christ.

Because **Romans 1:1** says, 'The gospel is the gospel of God.' **Galatians 1:7** says, 'It is the gospel of Christ.' So to refuse the Gospel, is as much a sin against God and against Christ as it is a sin against the Holy Spirit.

Now in **Matthew 12:27-32** and again in **Mark 3:23-29**, the sin that Jesus is talking about is shown to be something directly and particularly **against** the Holy Spirit. It was by the Holy Spirit that that particular miracle was performed. And the Pharisees had said, 'He has an unclean Spirit.' **Mark 3:22 / Matthew 12:24**. Now that's how they thought about the Holy Spirit. 'The Spirit of God was an evil Spirit', they said.

Now you must have noticed that they didn't deny that the miracle had been performed. If they could have disproved the miracle by showing that Jesus had some kind of trick and that He was a conjurer or a magician. They would of discredited Jesus, but they didn't try to do that, they didn't even suggest it.

If they had accused Jesus of fraud, they would have been speaking against Him, which wouldn't have been the unforgivable sin as Jesus says. These men went beyond Jesus and they made direct attack on the Holy Spirit and what they actually did was to call the Holy Spirit a wicked Spirit, an unclean Spirit, the Spirit of the devil. In other words, it was a deliberate attack on the Spirit of Holiness.

Indeed, the very way that Jesus puts it shows that we're not dealing an indifferent rejection of the message of the Spirit like we get in the world today when people refuse to become Christians. But with something aggressive, something deliberate, something active. And that's what He means when He uses that expression, '**speaking against the Holy Spirit.**'

Remember that **Stephen** was accused of attacking God and Moses and the temple. '**Attacking**'. They said in **Acts 6:11**, '**We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God.**' In other words, they accused Stephen of launching an attack on God. And that's exactly what these men were doing. They were launching an attack on the Holy Spirit.

In fact, Stephen implies that the Jews were always doing that in **Acts 7:51** he says, '**You stiff-necked people, you always resist the Holy Spirit!**' In other words, '**You always fight against the Holy Spirit, you are always in opposition to the Holy Spirit.**'

So why is this particular sin unforgivable? And why should a sin be unforgivable? Is it because God will not forgive it? Surely that can't be the answer.

Surely God has not marked out one particular sin as being so hideous and wicked, so terrible and grievous that He says, 'No'. '**Murder, I'll forgive that, lying, I'll forgive that, immorality, I'll even forgive that, blasphemy against Jesus, yes I'll forgive that, I forgave Paul for doing that, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, No I draw the line there.**'

Does God behave like that? Of course not. That's an impossible theory, to suggest that there is one sin that God will not forgive is utterly out of keep of all that you know about the character of God. Because time and time again God has shown us, pleading with men. **'Repent then, why will you die.'**

We are shown a God who's deepest longing is for men to turn to God and be forgiven. **'Come now let us reason together'**, said the Lord. **'Though your sins may be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, although they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.'** Isaiah 1:18. **'God is not willing that any should perish but that all come to repentance.'** 2 Peter 3:9. And we could go on.

The next question usually asked concerning this sin is **whether or not it is still possible to commit it today?** Opinions on this question certainly vary, and scholars seem to be divided in their positions. The evidence, however, seems to point toward the idea that this sin **cannot** be committed today.

1. The circumstances under which the sin is described cannot prevail today, due to the fact that the age of miracles has ceased, **1 Corinthians 13:8-12**. No one today will have the opportunity to witness Jesus performing miracles in person. **2 Corinthians 5:16**.

2. There is no other mention of the sin in any Biblical passage written **after** the resurrection of Christ.

None of the inspired New Testament writers refers to the sin in any epistle or in the **Book of Acts**, and none offers warnings to new converts about avoiding the sin post-Pentecost.

In conclusion, **'blasphemy against the Holy Spirit'** is the only **'unforgivable sin'** mentioned in the Bible, and it is mentioned in the context of the Pharisees accusing Jesus of being possessed by the devil. The context indicates that it was a specific sin, and not a series of forgivable sins, or an attitude of persistent unbelief. After the resurrection, no inspired writer mentions the sin, and no warnings against it were recorded.

There is no concrete evidence that it can be committed today. The fact that it's not mentioned **after** the resurrection, lends itself to the idea that it **cannot** still be committed. In fact, the indication from passages such as **1 John 1:7+9** is that **'all unrighteousness'** that a person could commit today **can** be forgiven by the blood of Jesus.

Losing the Holy Spirit

Once the Holy Spirit enters a person, can He leave? In **Psalm 51**, David prayed, **'Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your holy Spirit from me'**. Psalm 51:11.

The Bible gives the example of the Holy Spirit **'leaving'** Samson. **'And she said, 'The Philistines are upon you, Samson!' So he awoke, from his sleep, and said, 'I will go out as before, at other times, and shake myself free!' But he did not know that the Lord had departed from him'**. Judges 16:20.

In another instance, the Holy Spirit is said to have left Saul, **'But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and a distressing spirit from the Lord troubled him'**. 1 Samuel 16:14.

These passages seem to teach that one can lose the Holy Spirit. But this isn't necessarily the case. There are other possible solutions to this question. Some believe that the situations of **David**, **Samson**, and **Saul** must be understood in their Old Testament context.

It appears that during that period, the Holy Spirit didn't indwell believers on a permanent basis but rather His presence in the life of the believer was of a limited duration.

A second view holds that it wasn't the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that left these people, but a particular anointing or empowering of the Spirit that departed. **David** and **Saul** were kings and had a special anointing from God to rule the people.

Samson also had a special anointing from God to lead Israel. What left Samson and Saul and what David prayed to retain was not the indwelling of the Holy Spirit but rather the Holy Spirit's anointing to rule.

Maybe we should think about like this, if a Christian falls from grace then surely the Holy Spirit won't stay where He's not welcome or can't influence a person's life anymore. The Bible tells us that a true believer can't continue to practice sin as a life style. **1 John 3:10.**

If you have a person who is living in sin wilfully and refuses to repent, then that person's salvation has to be questioned. **Hebrews 10:26-31.** One reason is because the inward grieving of the Holy Spirit will not allow a believer to remain in sin. **Ephesians 4:30** and the fact that we have been given a new nature, also precludes us living in sin.

Along this line, we recall the importance of the **Tent of Meeting** and then the **Temple** built by **Solomon**. God's presence was there in the day and in the night. But when Israel turned away from God and the people were carried away into **Babylonian captivity**, **Ezekiel** saw a vision depicting God's Spirit leaving the temple.

Ezekiel 10:18 'Then the glory of the LORD departed from the threshold of the temple and stood over the cherubim.'

The next chapter says, 'The glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city and stood over the mountain which is east of the city.' **Ezekiel 11:22+23.**

I don't pretend to have a complete picture on this matter, but I wouldn't exclude the idea that the Holy Spirit leaves a Christian similar to the way that God's Spirit left the temple. The leaving of the Spirit wasn't at the first sin or trespass since God is longsuffering and patient with His people.

Paul reminded the Christians that sin 'grieves' the Holy Spirit and not to do so, **Ephesians 4:30.** If God's Holy Spirit leaves a Christian it would only be after it was certain the person had left God.

The position that the Holy Spirit leaves the type of person being described in **Hebrews 6:4-6** isn't as tenuous or difficult a position in my opinion, as one that says God's Spirit must **not** leave since we have no explicit example of Him leaving and coming back into the repentant soul.

Since God's Spirit is first given at baptism when there is forgiveness of sins, the seal of the Spirit, **Ephesians 1:13+14** could return when the straying Christian repents and prays. 'Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you.' **Acts 8:22.**

I was asked if I really believe that God would leave a Christian and the answer is **No!** But **Hebrews 6:4-8** describes someone who has left God and would be listed more as a former Christian. The point of the question here isn't to understate the grace of God or to overstate the responsibility of the Christian, but only to explore that there is a point at which a man no longer enjoys the presence of God.

It is rightly pointed out that God is longsuffering and patient with His children. Christians aren't perfect, but they are made perfect by the sanctifying work of Christ as they walk by faith, not by sight. **2 Corinthians 5:7.** But if a man turns back to the world, removing his hand from the plow and looking back, he is no longer fit for the kingdom of heaven. 'No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.' **Luke 9:62.**

The Holy Spirit still speaks to us today

At the end of every letter, to each of the churches in **Asia Minor**, there is a little phrase which says, 'Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.' **Revelation 2:7 / Revelation 2:11 / Revelation 2:17 / Revelation 2:29 / Revelation 3:6 / Revelation 3:13 / Revelation 3:22.** I want us to consider the question, **what would the Holy Spirit say to us today?** I believe that the first thing the Holy Spirit would say to us is this.

Believe in Him!

Now let me say this, if the Bible didn't exist, or if you had never read the Bible, you would know nothing at all about the Holy Spirit. And that's because it's only through the Scriptures does the Holy Spirit reveal Himself to mankind. You see there's no denying the existence of the Holy Spirit in Scripture.

In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit is mentioned **88 times.** **23 books** in the Old Testament refer to the Holy Spirit, although the actual expression 'Holy Spirit' is used only **3 times.** **Psalm 51:11** 'Do not cast me from your presence or take your holy Spirit from me.' **Isaiah 63:10** 'Yet they rebelled and grieved his holy Spirit.' **Isaiah 63:11** 'Where is he who set his holy Spirit among them.'

In the New Testament the Holy Spirit is mentioned **264 times**. There are **60** or more references to the Holy Spirit in the **Gospels**. The **Book of Acts** has **57 references** to the Holy Spirit, which is why some call it 'The Acts of the Holy Spirit.'

The epistles refer to the Holy Spirit **132 times** and there are only **3 epistles** that makes no mention of the Holy Spirit, **Philemon, 2+3 John**. And so there is no denying the existence of the Holy Spirit when we use the Scriptures.

But do you as a Christian believe in the 'Hagios Pneuma', the Holy Spirit? You see we talk a lot about God the Father and Jesus the Son but there are times when we neglect the Holy Spirit.

And I think part of the reason for neglecting to preach, teach or even talk about the Holy Spirit is because we don't want to be recognised or be associated with some other religious groups. But the Holy Spirit says to each and everyone one of us today, '**believe in Me!**'

He would tell us that He is not some '**active force**' like the **Jehovah Witnesses** believe. He would tell us that He is not some form of '**electricity**' like the **Mormons** believe. He would tell us that He is not an '**it**' but He has a personality and He is as much as the Godhead as the Father and Son are.

When Jesus prepared for His return to heaven, He said to His apostles in **John 14:16** '**And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Comforter to help you and be with you forever**'. Now that term '**Comforter**' is derived from two Greek words that signify '**beside**' and '**to call**,' and so it denotes one who has been called to the side of another for assistance. **Could an impersonal 'active force' give the apostles help and comfort them?** No.

You see the Holy Spirit can do things only a person can do. **John 14:26** tells us the Holy Spirit can **teach**. **John 15:26** tells us that the Holy Spirit can **testify**. **John 16:8+13** tells us that the Holy Spirit can **convict, guide and speak**. A real person has the attributes of personality, which include a mind, will, and emotions.

Does the Holy Spirit have a will? Yes, He does. When it comes to the distribution of spiritual gifts Paul says in **1 Corinthians 12:11** '**But one and the same Spirit is active in all these, distributing to each person as He wills.**'

Does the Holy Spirit have a mind? Yes, He does. **1 Corinthians 2:10** '**The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.**' **Does the Holy Spirit have emotions?** Yes, He does. **Ephesians 4:30** '**Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God.**' If the Holy Spirit can be grieved, then He has emotions and because the Holy Spirit has a mind, a will, and emotions, we know that He is a Person.

You see a real person also has the capacity to have relationships with others. That's the primary reason we have a mind, will, and emotions. According to **Philippians 2:1**, the Spirit is able to have fellowship with us. According to **2 Corinthians 13:14**, the Holy Spirit can have communion with us. One who is able to commune and to have fellowship is capable of personal relationships, therefore, the Holy Spirit is a person.

But not only is the Holy Spirit a person, He is also Deity. For example, we all know that God is holy but so is the Holy Spirit, holiness is in His name. Holiness is a basic characteristic of the Spirit, in fact the Spirit is so holy that blasphemy against the Spirit cannot be forgiven, although blasphemy against Jesus could be according to **Matthew 12:32**. Insulting the Spirit is just as sinful as trampling the Son of God under foot according to **Hebrews 10:29**.

And so not only is He holy like God, He is also eternal like God. According to **John 14:16** the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, will be with us '**forever**' and **Hebrews 9:14** clearly tells us He is eternal. We also know that the Holy Spirit is '**omnipresence**' which basically means He is present everywhere.

When David is praising God's greatness, he asked, in **Psalm 139:7+8** '**Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.**' David says I can't go anywhere without your Holy Spirit being present.

We also know that the Holy Spirit is '**omnipotence**' which basically means He is all powerful. The works that God does, such as creation, are also ascribed to the Holy Spirit. **Job 33:4** '**The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life.**' **Psalm 104:30** '**When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground.**'

The miracles of Jesus Christ were done ‘by the Spirit’ according to **Matthew 12:28**. In Paul’s ministry, the work that ‘Christ has accomplished’ was done ‘through the power of the Spirit’ according to **Romans 15:18+19**.

The Holy Spirit is also ‘omniscience’ which basically means He knows everything. Paul says in **1 Corinthians 2:10** that ‘The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.’ The very next verse, **1 Corinthians 2:11**, tells us that the Spirit of God ‘knows the thoughts of God’.

Holiness, eternity, omnipresence, omnipotence and omniscience are attributes of God’s essence, that is, characteristic of the nature of divine existence. The Holy Spirit has all these attributes, which means He is God.

After all, when you think about it, when we baptise someone, according to **Matthew 28:19** we baptise people into ‘the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.’ In other words, we are baptised into a relationship with what the Bible calls the Godhead. And the Holy Spirit is screaming out to every one of us, ‘believe in Me’.

Use Him!

The Holy Spirit would say to us today, ‘use Me!’ In **Acts 2** when the Jews were asking what must they do to be right with God, Peter replied in **Acts 2:38** ‘Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’ Peter says at our baptism we receive the forgiveness of our sins and we receive the ‘dorea’, the gift, of the Holy Spirit.

Now why has God blessed us with the gift of the Holy Spirit Himself? Well there are many reason but one reason we have the gift of the Holy Spirit Himself is because He acts like our guarantor.

Ephesians 1:13+14 ‘And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.’

2 Corinthians 1:21+22 ‘Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.’

Paul says that the sanctifying and comforting influences of the Holy Spirit seal believers as the children of God, and heirs of heaven. And it’s by Him that believers are sealed, that is, separated and set apart for God, and distinguished and marked as belonging to Him.

In other words, the Holy Spirit says, He doesn’t want us worrying about our eternal salvation, because as long as He continues to live in us, He will act as the deposit which guarantees our inheritance to come. You see God could have made a body for the Holy Spirit as He did for Jesus, but He didn’t. God gives us the privilege and the indescribable honour of hosting the Holy Spirit within us. **1 Corinthians 3:16** ‘You know that you are God’s sanctuary and that God’s Spirit lives in you.’

Use His Gifts

But how can we use Him? In what ways can we use Him?

1. Use the gifts He has blessed us with. **Romans 12:6-8** ‘We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.’

The gift of Prophesying.

Paul says that we all have different ‘Charisma,’ gifts. And before you start screaming out that the gift of prophesying has ceased think again. Yes, in **1 Corinthians 13:8** tells us that ‘prophesying will cease’ but this is talking about supernatural prophesying, that includes ‘forth telling.’

But here is **Romans 12**, Paul isn’t talking about supernatural prophesying, after all that was one of the reasons he wanted to go to Rome in the first place remember. Paul says to them in **Romans 1:11** ‘I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong.’

One of the reasons Paul wanted to go to Rome was to impart some gifts upon them, **why?** Because no apostle had been to Rome and they didn’t have any supernatural gifts. See the word ‘prophesying’ can also means ‘forth speech’ which simply means preaching.

And notice that your prophesying in **according to your grace**, which basically means you can preach according to your ability and understanding of the Scriptures. Some people know a lot about the Bible, others don't, but it doesn't matter, just teach what you know.

When you think about Moses, he complains that he is slow of speech and of a slow tongue. But notice in that whole story that God doesn't promise him a new tongue, but He does promise that He will be with him and train his tongue.

And when you read **Deuteronomy** and listen to Moses forty years after in the Moab plain, it's as though his brain fired up and his tongue got loosened and trained. And it's at the end of **Deuteronomy** he gives that series of farewell talks burning with eloquence.

Here, Paul says that a prophet should use his gift **'in proportion to his faith'**. A prophet shouldn't prophesy anything that's not according to his faith. He shouldn't speak as a prophet without being certain he's speaking the words of God. He shouldn't get carried away with enthusiasm and begin to speak his own words while prophesying. Never feel that you are obliged to prophesy because everybody else is doing it.

Note also, that prophecy must also be in **accordance with our faith**. It shouldn't contradict the doctrines and principles of the Word of God. Anyone prophesying something contrary to the Word of God is a false prophet.

The gift of Serving.

Another gift the Holy Spirit will help you with is **servicing**. He says **'use Me, to help you serve.'** But the kind of serving He has in mind here, is the kind where you don't want to serve or can't be bothered to serve. We don't know what it means to be a servant until we get treated like one. The Holy Spirit will help you serve in areas where you don't really want to serve in.

Doing God's work by humbly serving His people is an important gift. Personally serving others has a great positive impact on the world's view of Christians and Christianity.

It has much more impact than the work of great speakers or expositors. Those who serve by doing menial, low-profile work shouldn't feel that they are less valuable to God. God honours those who responsibly and diligently carry out what He has called them to do, whether it be leading a congregation or waxing its floors.

The gift of Teaching.

Another gift the Holy Spirit will help you with is **teaching**. He says **'use Me, to help you teach.'** This is much like the gift of preaching but without the pulpit. He will help you prepare and deliver a lesson if you allow Him to guide your thoughts using His Word.

And again you can teach one person or a thousand people, it makes no difference. And when you're sharing the Gospel with others He will remind you of Scripture, so that you can be a more effective teacher.

Teaching is different from prophecy. Teaching mainly entails the interpretation, exposition and explanation of the Bible. Teachers shouldn't feel that they must be speaking words directly from God, as do prophets, however, teachers should seek the guidance and instruction of the Holy Spirit as they prepare to teach.

The gift of Encouraging.

Another gift the Holy Spirit will help you with is **encouraging**. He says **'use Me, to help you encourage others.'** **Who encourages the encourager?** We all need encouragement, **don't we?** A simple phone call, text message, a visit or kind word all help make our Christian journey a little more bearable.

We all appreciate a word of encouragement. Encouragement is a valuable gift that can be given to all, for the Christian in his service of God, for the downtrodden and persecuted to trust and depend on the Lord, for the sinner to repent and turn to Jesus. I dare say that we can all serve the Lord at one time or another using the gift of encouragement.

The gift of Giving.

Another gift the Holy Spirit will help you with is **giving**. He says **'use Me, to help you give generously.'** Now please don't think just about monetary giving, we can give in so many ways. We can give of our time, our energy, our ears, our council, our strength, our love and the Holy Spirit will help us give generously in all these areas.

Some are endowed by God the talent and ability to make money in this world. These are the ones who are prime candidates to cultivate the gift of giving! However, the gift of giving isn't limited to financial giving. As Peter, you can say, **'Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you'**, Acts 3:6. You can give services, talents, time, etc. And when you give, do it as Jesus commanded, **'Freely you have received, freely give'**, Matthew 10:8. Also, Paul in these verses encourages the giver to **'give generously'**. Romans 12:8.

The gift of Leading.

Another gift the Holy Spirit will help you with is **leading**. He says **'use Me, to help you lead diligently.'** Now Paul doesn't just have leading like the men each Lord's Day do in mind here. He's telling us that the Holy Spirit will help us lead by example.

And we all should be doing that in our homes, in our workplaces, in the supermarket, wherever we find ourselves. We should be leading by example and showing the world that we are Christians.

The gift of leadership is, indeed, a gift from God. Very few are given the ability to be good leaders. Leadership is an important gift specifically in the organization of a church and its ministries. Every activity and service of a church needs a leader. Leaders shouldn't take their role lightly, but, as Paul says, they should **'govern diligently'**.

The gift of showing mercy.

Another gift the Holy Spirit will help you with is **showing mercy**. He says **'use Me, to help you show mercy cheerfully.'** The Holy Spirit wants us all to be like the Samaritan, Luke 10:25-37, He wants us to help those who have been or are being afflicted by others. He wants us to help the helpless, He wants us to feed the hungry and visit the sick.

Mercy is a Godly trait. Our God is characterised by His mercy. When one truly shows mercy, he is being a true representative of God. However, as Paul says, when you show mercy, do it **'cheerfully'**, not grudgingly, not because you **'have to'**, but sincerely and from the heart.

Use Me for Intercession

2. I personally believe that the **second area** where the Holy Spirit asks us to use Him, is in our moments of weakness.

Romans 8:26 **'In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.'**

There are **two intercessors** for the Christian.

1. **Christ** at the right hand of the Majesty on High, Hebrews 7:25, and
2. **The Holy Spirit** within the Christian himself. Thus, there are **two sources of encouragement** open to the Christian.
 - a. The blessed **hope** within himself, and
 - b. The **help** of the Holy Spirit. This entire arrangement supplies both human and divine encouragement to the child of God.

'We do know what we ought to pray for' doesn't mean that Christians have no knowledge of prayer, but, as someone noted, **'Our weakness and ignorance in this life are so great that in many respects, possibly as a rule, we know not what we should pray for as we ought. We want many things, and it may be praying for them, which, were they granted, would prove our greatest rops. Fortune; while, we do not want, and never ask, for many things which would be our greatest blessings. Here then is ignorance of what we should pray for; and, as to how we should pray, I imagine we are equally at a loss. Confessedly then, we are weak and need aid.'**

With groaning's that cannot be uttered is a reference to the dimly perceived and partially understood longings of the redeemed soul which are impossible for the Christian to frame into articulated petitions to the Father, but which

needs, though inadequately understood, are nevertheless understood by the Spirit of God who transfers such inexpressible yearnings of the soul to the Throne itself.

This identification of the groanings mentioned here with the believer's inadequacy, rather than with any insufficiency of the Holy Spirit, follows the thought of this paraphrase, 'Such therefore, are our groans, which the Spirit, in aid to our infirmity, makes use of. For we know not what prayers to make, as we ought, but the Spirit Himself lays for us our requests before God.' Romans 8:26.

Therefore, when the Christian's prayers have reached the boundary of language as a vehicle for the conveyance of thought, when such prayers become more of a heavenward sigh than a formal utterance, then the Christian may know that the inward Intercessor is fully able to convey the soul's true desire to the throne.

Have you ever had moments where you just feel burdened with all sorts of worries and cares? I don't know about you but there have been times in my Christian life when pain and confusion have set in, and I simply don't know what to pray for or how to pray to God. Paul says when you get to the point when you just don't know how to pray, the Holy Spirit will intercede for us.

In other words, He will speak to the Father on our behalf, He will express our deepest needs to the Father. And so the Holy Spirit says, when you get that low, when you get to the point you want to pray but don't know how to pray, then don't worry. He says, use Me, He will speak on our behalf to our heavenly Father.

Let Him Use You!

3. The Holy Spirit would say to us today, 'let Me use you!' When we come to the Lord Jesus He gives us His Holy Spirit to help us live as He would have us live, and the more the Holy Spirit controls our lives, the more like Him we become. Romans 8:29 'For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.'

Conformed to the image of his Son is another expression that means 'becoming a Christian,' but there is a specific reference also to the Christian's being transformed into the image or likeness of Christ, in mind, character, obedience, and all other qualities and virtues of the soul, but it doesn't end there. Finally, the children of God will be raised from the dead in the true likeness of the risen Saviour.

As John wrote, 'Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.' 1 John 3:2. God wants us to become like His Son and the Holy Spirit says, 'let me use you, to look more like Jesus'.

2 Corinthians 3:18 'And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.' That word, 'transformed' is the Greek word 'Metamorphoo', and it's where we get our word 'morph'.

God didn't give us the gift of the Holy Spirit just for the fun of it, He gave us the gift because He wants to change us, and He wants to morph us into the image of Jesus. Let the world see that He is using you, and how will the world see that your life is being influenced by the Holy Spirit?

Romans 8:14 'For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.' People will know we are children of God because we allow His Spirit to lead our lives. Galatians 5:22+23 'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.'

The Holy Spirit wants to use us, not only to show the world Jesus in our lives but also to bring others to Christ. I believe we rely too much on ourselves sometimes rather than relying on the Holy Spirit when it comes to reaching the lost. For example, when you think about the Lord with Nicodemus in John 3.

Wasn't that a case of the right man, in the right place, saying the right thing, at the right time? Here was a man who came already prepared and we know today, sometimes when someone comes to us with a religious question, we can be almost certain they are a prepared person.

Look at John 4 with Jesus and the Samaritan women. When you think about that story, wasn't that the case of the right person, in the right place, at the right time? Here was a woman completely prepared and Jesus was so

responsive to her, He was responsive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit within Him and He immediately recognised from the way she responded that here was a woman who was ready.

Look at **Acts 8** and the case of **Philip and the Eunuch** and we can see that once again, the right man, in the right place, at the right time. Here is a man riding in his chariot reading the Gospel and the obvious question to ask was **'do you understand what you are reading?'** **Acts 8:30**.

It's a clear indication of the leading of the Holy Spirit that his answer was, he was reading **Isaiah 53**. **But who had put it in his heart to read that?** Obviously again it's the right person, at the right time. We need to allow the Holy Spirit do what He does best and that is prepare people's hearts.

And when we allow Him to do that, He speaks through you, to say the right thing, to a prepared person, at the right time.

I hope and pray this study of the Holy Spirit has been useful and equipped you more in your understanding of Him, Who He is and how He worked through creation and in the lives of those who lived in Bible times and how He still works through the Scripture and in our lives today.