

THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT
Life in the Spirit
Dr. George O. Wood

The Holy Spirit has always been active. From the first moments that our hearts are open in the scripture we find that the Spirit of God was engaged in activity. The Spirit of God was moving upon the face of the deep. Throughout the Old Testament days his activity is frequently noted and spoken of. The Spirit of the Lord would come upon people. He would come upon judges. He would come upon kings. He would come upon prophets. When the Spirit would come upon someone they would do something. The Spirit would come and then it would be said that the person crossed over or went up or went down or spoke or broke a picture. But when the Spirit comes we respond with activity. Because the Spirit is the one who generates the activity in the kingdom of God.

The Spirit is present not only in power upon Old Testament saints but in the days of Jesus the Spirit is at work. It is through his ministry or administration in a mystical way that we cannot know or understand completely that the agent in the conception of Jesus. For Mary conceived by the Spirit. In the same way on a spiritual level the Spirit seeks to birth Jesus in each one of our lives.

The Spirit is present upon Jesus in baptism when he descends upon him bodily. In like measure the Spirit comes upon us once we are converted to baptize us into our mission as workers in Pentecostal power. This Spirit is with Jesus thrusting him into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil in the same matter the Spirit is active in our life thrusting us out into those pressure points where our faith is tested.

The Spirit endows Jesus with power and ministry so that he says “The Spirit Of the Lord is upon me and has anointed me to preach good news,” both verbally and through the Lord’s activity. In the same measure his Spirit rests upon his people.

If you want to get an idea of the kind of activity the Spirit is engaged in look at the activity he was engaged in with Jesus and you will find the parallel in our own life.

It is through the Spirit that Jesus himself is raised from the dead – Romans 8:11. Just as the presence of the Spirit was necessary in Old Testament days for judges, prophets and kings to do the work of the Lord and just as it was necessary for Jesus to be empowered by the Spirit so it is essential in the church and in our lives personally that the Spirit dwell and the Spirit do his work. It has been said of the Holy Spirit that he does “office work.” That is a phrase the older theologians use. That means that the Holy Spirit has a job description. You can count upon reading the scripture and count on reading what the job description of the Spirit is. The scripture does not leave that in doubt for us to imagine. Or to in some way create a context for. The Spirit of God has specific work to be done and here is what the scripture teaches us about that work.

First it is the Holy Spirit’s work to exalt Jesus. That’s his first work. That’s his central work. That is the work in which he is always most concerned. Jesus himself says it in John 15:26 “When the comforter comes who I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify or glorify me.” John 16:14 “He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. He will bring glory to me.”

THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT

Life in the Spirit

As believers we never get hung up on simply glorifying or exalting in the Spirit. But we realize that it is always the Spirit's mission to exalt another.

The long-standing criticism of Pentecostals is the false charge that we over emphasize the work Of the Holy Spirit and the person of the Spirit to that of Jesus. If that charge is made against Pentecostals and charismatics we must sure that it is never true. The Spirit has not come so that we might go away from the service talking about the gifts of the Spirit. The Spirit has come that we might go away deeply impressed in our personality with the person of Jesus Christ and go away excited about his work. The gifts are necessary to thrust us into the mission and work of Jesus. The purpose of the Spirit is to exalt Jesus and let him be lifted up.

The second work of the Holy Spirit is to convict us. John 16:8-11 Jesus identifies this as the work Of the Spirit, "When he comes he will convict the world of guilt and sin and righteousness and judgment. In regard to sin because men do not believe in me. In regard to righteousness because I'm going to the Father and you will see me no longer. In regard to judgment because the prince of this world now stands condemned."

The Holy Spirit is the prosecuting attorney of God. Attempting to get us to settle with the Lord out of court. Before we face that judgment day when the book is thrown against us. It is the Spirit's mission to convict us in three areas. First, to give us an awakened since of sin. He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin. The particular sin that the Spirit is most concerned of convincing us of is our unbelief in Jesus. He wants to reverse that unbelief to trust and believe in him.

Then the Spirit wants to convict us so we will affirm the righteousness of Jesus – in regard to righteousness because I am going to the Father. The Pharisees said he was of the devil. The Spirit is saying instead he is of the Father and the Holy Spirit in this world is out to gain a reversal on the world's verdict of Jesus. The world has judged him either as an imposter or an evil power or simply one among many prophets. The Spirit's mission is to affirm the righteousness of Jesus and say Look to him alone.

The Spirit convicts us of judgement that is already handed down "He will convict the world of judgment to come." And judgment has come because the prince of this world, the evil one, has been judged by the righteousness of Jesus. The Spirit comes to usher me in to an awakened sense of sin and an acknowledgement Of Jesus and an acknowledgement that judgment has already been past against the evil one. He is a defeated foe.

The third work of the Spirit that the scriptures present to us is that the Spirit comes to regenerate us. To take that which is dead, our Adam nature, our fallen nature, and bring it to light.

John 3:5 Jesus says, "No one can be born of God unless he is born of water and of the Spirit." A spiritual regeneration that comes through the Spirit's presence. And Jesus acts upon John 3:5 when in John 20:22 in the evening of his resurrection he breathes upon the disciples and says to hem, "Receive the Spirit." Up until the time of John 20:22 the faith of Jesus' disciples had been identical to every Old Testament saint. They looked forward to the Messiah that would one day come. Their faith therefore was an anticipatory faith that one day God would send the mediator. But when we come to John 20:22 for the first time ever Jesus' work is finished on the cross and he stands before the disciples with proof of his living presence. And that his work on the cross

THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT

Life in the Spirit

has merit. On that basis they are now given the opportunity that no one before them had ever been given to believe in him who is life. And to believe no longer with anticipatory faith but believe on the fact of his finished work which he had accomplished. And when he breathes on them he gives to them life. Life in a new sense. God had formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living being. But now in John 20 Jesus breathed a new order of life into his disciples – eternal life.

*

Just as we have born the likeness of the earthly man so we bear now the likeness of the man of heaven. Through Jesus Christ the law of the Spirit of life has set me free from the law of sin and death. I am a new person in Jesus through the Holy Spirit who has brought the life of Jesus to me.

The fourth work of the Holy Spirit is that he dwells within us. “Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives within you,” says Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:16. These words were addressed to a carnal church, which had become insensitive to the Spirit’s presence. Yet Paul is reminding that church that although they are insensitive to the Spirit’s presence and filled with many things that are not of the Spirit yet God’s Spirit lives within them. The key to change is not by getting up and gritting your teeth and going for it. It’s by acknowledging once again we are the Spirit’s people.

On a personal level Paul asks in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 “Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you whom we have received from God.” He further tells us in 2 Thessalonians and 1 Peter 1 that we have been sanctified through the Spirit and the fruit of his life is meant to be evident in us. The Spirit dwells in us that we might ask him to dwell in us richly and deeply. We are charged in the New Testament to be filled with the Spirit. The assumption being that the Spirit might be allowed by us to only partially dwell in us. And we need to allow him free access to every part of us.

The Christian life is lived in victory not by “sucking out” a sin here and there but by getting filled with the Spirit. I know of no better antidote to live with the victorious power in our lives than to ask humbly and earnestly of the Lord, “Fill me with the Spirit.”

There’s a rising tide of the Spirit’s presence that helps us resist the power of the evil one. In many ways our life is somewhat like a submarine. The deeper it dives the greater the pressure against it. And greater therefore must be the corresponding pressure within it to resist the evil one. We don’t successfully deal with just sin by trying to “suck” the sin out. But it’s by coming to the Lord and saying, “Lord, fill me full of the Holy Spirit and give me the abiding presence of Jesus.”

The fifth work of the Holy Spirit is that he seals believers.

Ephesians 4:30 “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” And Ephesians 1:13-14 “Having 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 were God’s possession.”

THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT

Life in the Spirit

When you become a believer God takes his invisible stamp of ownership, the Holy Spirit, and brands your life. The Holy Spirit's presence in your life is a mark that you belong to God. That you're owned by God. Paul says that in addition to that seal bearing witness to your being owned by the Lord it is a down payment that guarantees that you are completely Christ's and will be Christ's in that day. The Spirit, he says, is the down payment. It goes with the concept of sealed.

When a house goes up for sale, we say a house is sold when a contract is entered into. The house is put in escrow. There is then placed upon the for sale sign, a mark which every realtor rejoices in that says, "sold." As a matter of fact that house is not completely sold until it has cleared escrow. Hopefully the person that put the payment down has enough assets to complete the transaction. But in good faith that the new buyer has sufficient assets the owner of the home allows the realtor to put the sign outside that says "sold" when in fact it must yet go through escrow.

What Paul is saying is he's taking that analogy and applying it from the real estate world to our lives. He is saying there is coming a day when you will be completely God's in eternity. You are now in escrow and the Holy Spirit has sealed you. It's marked "Saved" across your life. Because one day you're going to be totally out of this world and out of this mixed nature of Adam and Christ and you're going to be completely his. You are in escrow. You are in salvation and the Holy Spirit owns you. He's got his seal upon your life. Fortunately we don't have to worry about the good credit of the one who's buying us. His assets are sufficient. When the "sold" sign goes up over our life it is a deposit that guarantees our redemption.

That's what Paul means by the fact that we are "sealed with the Spirit." The Spirit is the down payment of what is coming.

The Holy Spirit in sealing us testifies with our Spirit that we are God's children. When you have failed God, when you have sinned, it's certainly not the devil that's telling you that you are God's child. What is that still small voice that slips in and says even though you have failed there's mercy. "God loves you." Who is that that's saying that to you? That's the Holy Spirit who is acting because he has sealed you and has given you the deposit of his presence.

The sixth activity or work of the Holy Spirit is that he guides us. He guides the people of God.

There's so many instances of this in the scripture. A couple I'll cite. Acts 8:29 "The Spirit told Phillip, 'Go to that chariot and stay near it.'" Acts 13:2 "The Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabus and Saul to the work which I have called them.'"

The Spirit in our own individual lives. We're really helpless in getting accurate guidance and direction unless the Spirit works within us. The Spirit is especially present, especially active in juncture stages of our life. Times when we're making vital decisions that are going to effect us for days and days to come. Moment when choices hang in the balance and we don't know which direction we're going to go. The scripture again and again suggests to us that in those moments when we open ourselves to God the Holy Spirit works on us with power and we can rest in the creative work that the Spirit knows what he is doing in assigning us our mission within his body and within his world. The Spirit guides and he doesn't make mistakes in the guidance in our life. We may not chafe at the Spirit's direction but we can rest in the direction that he is providing.

THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT

Life in the Spirit

Even in this service today the Lord is calling young people to distant, unreached peoples because for someone here this evening this service will be a service that you will later talk about, even as I have talked all these years about the chapel service at Evangel college fifteen years ago when I looked across the expanse of the room and felt the Spirit say, “George, look around you. This isn’t going to be your place of ministry much longer.”

Worship moments are tremendously important because we need to be alive to the fact that the spirit is creating synapses in our life – connections which will take us from point A to point B and guide us.

I encourage young people especially in moments of your life that in the next months and years the most important decisions you will ever make are going to be made. Whether you will marry, who you will marry, what your vocation will be, where you will go in life. How appropriate it is for you and how right it is for you to spend time in saturation praying that you might know what the mind of the Spirit is for your life. I can assure you the Spirit has a purpose for you. You can choose to get a hold of that purpose and go with it. Or grieve the Spirit by not spending time seeking his direction. Then settling for second best in your life. The Spirit will guide you. Open your life to him.

The seventh work of the Holy Spirit is that he prompts us to worship.

He prompts believers to worship and adore the ever-living God. Jesus has said in John 4:24 that “God is Spirit and they that worship him must worship him in Spirit and in truth.” In Luke 10:21 Jesus himself worshipped through the Spirit at that time. “Jesus filled with joy through the Holy Spirit...” Ephesians 5:18-19 admonishes us to be filled with the Spirit and to worship by “speaking to one another with Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.” Paul goes on to say in Ephesians 6:18 “Pray in the Spirit in all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.”

As we take the time to worship our well is always filled. For out of our inner man will flow rivers of living water. But let us stop being responsive to the Spirit in worship we find that almost immediately we run dry. The river has gone to some other person or some other church that will become alive to the Spirit’s presence.

Nothing scares me more as a person who has always belonged to the Pentecostal movement than a group of Pentecostal people going through the ritual of an ordinary Pentecostal worship service and singing the songs that have always been sung for the last 25 years and not being alive with what the Spirit is doing now in our lives. And sort of priding ourselves that we hang a name “Pentecostal” or “Assemblies of God” or whatever on the door as if that contributes to any reality. Names don’t mean anything. It’s not the name we wear, it’s the power we represent. It’s the purity of the product. You can’t label a church or institution as though it was always going to keep the Spirit. It doesn’t. Institutions change and they grow cold and they backslide and they need revival.

And we need revival. Our experience yesteryear with God is not going to sustain us right now. We need the power of the Spirit ever living in us every single day. It’s the work of the Spirit today that I want. Not the work of the Spirit that called me when I was a young person. Thank

THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT

Life in the Spirit

God for that. But I cannot last on that work of the Spirit although I thank God for it. I need the work of the Holy Spirit in my life today.

Pentecostal worship has always had a voluble dimension to it. It's been noisy. At times loud. We have this habit of all praising the Lord together. Sometimes that becomes a form. Growing up in the Pentecostal church I reached a point in my life where I said, Enough is enough! I'm not going to have anybody play with my emotions and milk me into being voluble. I can praise God quietly. I'm a cerebral Pentecostal. I'll just think Pentecostal. I think sometimes what we are exposed to we react against. There is a lot in the Pentecostal movement of unreality and simply venerate of worship that I as a young person reacted against.

But you can't reinvent the wheel. One Of the reasons why we've had voluble worship is because it is flat out scriptural. Whenever you find yourself in the scripture you will find people not praying mentally to God. You'll find them praying aloud to God. In fact, in the book of Acts, when the Spirit comes on the day of Pentecost they're all praising God greatly. The implication behind the text is that there was real thrust and power to their speech as they praised him. Paul says as an act of will "I will sing with my understanding and I will sing in the Spirit. I will pray with my understanding and I will pray with the Spirit." It's a choice we have to make as to whether we enter in to that time when Jesus is exalted and the Spirit comes upon us to praise. Or whether we're going to simply let it pass by us.

There's a time to be quiet in the presence of the Lord, a time to hear the word of the Lord, "Be still O my soul and know that I am God." But there is a time to praise the Lord with a trumpet. There is a time to praise the Lord with an upraised voice. There is a time to say from the depths of the inner man "Hallelujah, the Lord God the omnipotent one. He reigneth." The Spirit incites us to that kind of worship. The Spirit encourages us to be verbal. There are moments in a relationship with one another where still water runs deep. There are moments when the ebullient joy is like an artesian well and like Old Faithful, it simply erupts with the glory and the presence of the Lord. As Christians, as Spirit filled believers, we ought to be willing to just go along with what direction the Spirit is flowing in any given moment in time. The Spirit wants me to be lifted up in the presence of God in worship and exalt his name. In doing that I find a oneness with the Lord and a union with his purpose and person.

The Holy Spirit has an eighth work to empower us for witness.

"Stay in Jerusalem until you receive power from on high. You will be witnesses of mine in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the uttermost part of the world."

Paul says to the Thessalonians in 1:5 "Our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction." Words are not enough. It must take the Spirit to minister the things of Jesus to us. The Lord promises us that as we go forth with the Holy Spirit to witness, the Spirit will be active in our witness and empower us for service.

There is a balance between the worship of the Lord and the work of the Lord. It is never the purpose of the Lord to simply have the Spirit stir us up to worship and then leave us there to go away simply centered on worship. But it's the Spirit's task to still strength us in the moment of worship that we go out from the worship of the Lord empowered to do the work of the Lord.

THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT

Life in the Spirit

I pray that the Spirit will come upon us in boldness so that whether it's in a school, an office, a neighborhood, we may dare to ask God to open doors before us. I don't know any better way to reach people for the Lord than to do it the way the Holy Spirit had the early church do it. That is to be filled with the Spirit and send people out to witness and do the work of the Lord and to empower with the Spirit. The Spirit has an incredible way of doing that.

I have a sense that there is a whole segment within this community that needs to be cracked with what I call the Cornelius Connection. There was a strata of society that the church would have never reached, a whole separate cultural group that it didn't have hooks and handles on. It was called the Gentiles. It was also called the upper class. In Cornelius' case. The Holy Spirit put that all together in Peter's heart and life and gave a connection both through Cornelius the unbeliever on the one hand through whom the Spirit was working. And Peter on the other hand to bring them together.

As a body of Christ we need to be praying that we'll be open so that the Holy Spirit can help us connect with people. The power of the Spirit for witness.

Ninth, the Holy Spirit enables us to understand and apply what is taught in the word of God.

The Spirit not only inspired the scripture but he caused it to be inspiring. 2 Timothy 3:16 "All scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." Whatever the Spirit does will line up with the scripture because the Spirit and the scripture always agree since the Spirit inspired the scripture to begin with.

The Pentecostal movement has forgotten this at times and gone off into emotional excesses and tripping out on things being spiritual that were not scriptural. But God has two great rivers that are flowing and they both stream out of the Spirit's presence, the river of his word and the river of experience with Christ. And those flow together.

The Spirit causes us to understand God's word. I was reading again the story of Augustine's conversion, this man who had changed the shape of the church. No one can doubt that Augustine had a genuine experience with Jesus Christ. He had dabbled in occult religions. He had lived a most immoral life. His godly mother Veronica had prayed for him all his life. Then as a man in his middle thirties, sated down with his sin, one day he heard the voice of a child saying to him, "Take and read!" He rushed to a nook in his garden where he found lying open this passage from the book of Romans – 13:12 – "The night is nearly over. The day is almost here. Let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently as in the daytime not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather put on the Lord Jesus Christ and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature." He took and read and lived. Because the Spirit took the word Of God and made it alive.

If you're a Christian, you're a Christian because God drove his word deep in your life. If you're growing as a Christian it's because the Holy Spirit is faithfully applying that word. That's his work.

Then the Holy Spirit will enliven our mortal bodies. That's a word of the Holy Spirit that's yet to come.

THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT

Life in the Spirit

Romans 8:11 “The Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who lives in you.”

Handbook of Christian Truth says, “The child of God is utterly dependent upon the Spirit for his spiritual birth, life, victory and service. The more yielded he or she is to his indwelling guest the happier, healthier, holier and more hopeful he becomes. This is the Christian’s basic law of life. Would you experience daily the love and peace Of the Savior? Would you live on the highest possible spiritual plain? Would you have victory over temptation? Would you have a song in your soul? Would you be a blessing to others wherever you go? Then keep yielded to the Spirit. Only thus will your life and witness count for God. Stay yielded to the Spirit.”

I want us to take some moments at the close of this service to do that. And to act on this earlier word that the Spirit gave to us in a spiritual gift as well as let the Spirit have some private and personal moments to work in our lives personally.

I want us to take a moment and sing this verse. It’s a prayer to the Lord and the Lord has been working this oiver and over in my heart. “Oh holy dove of God descending, yiou are the love that knows no ending. All of our shattered dreams you’re mending. Spirit, now live in me.

There are people inhere this evening with shattered dreams. The Spirit wants to come into your life and put a new dream and a new vision and make you fit and useful for God. There are others in this service who don’t yet have a dream for God, don’t yet know how the Lord is going to use your life. It’s like the Spirit to not show you all of that in one blow. But it’s very like the Spirit to put in your mind a vision of some scene, of some arresting picture that will etch itself on your mind. I want to pray that in these moments of worship the Spirit would either mend and repair the dream that God would have in our life or the Spirit would give us a dream.

[end of tape]