

The Person & Work of the Holy Spirit

Session #1

All page numbers refer to J.I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1984)



“Christianity in North America is 3,000 miles wide and half an inch deep.” (10)



INTRODUCTION: WE NEED SCRIPTURE TO GROW

1. We were created in Adam with a natural knowledge of God (Gen. 1:26–30; 2:7–9; 2:15–20)
2. Although this knowledge was corrupted and is in need of restoration in Christ (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10), the unregenerate knows God as Creator (Ps. 19; Rom. 1:18–32)
3. Yet apart from Christ this knowledge *isn't* of God as Redeemer (1 Cor. 2:6–16)
4. Thus God revealed himself throughout the ages (Heb. 1:1–2) and had that revelation inscripturated; therefore Calvin's image of glasses (17–18):¹
 - “...though the effulgence which is presented to every eye, both in the heavens and on the earth, leaves the ingratitude of man without excuse, since God, in order to bring the whole human race under the same condemnation, holds forth to all, without exception, a mirror of his Deity in his works, **another and better help must be given to guide us properly to God as a Creator...he added the light of his Word in order that he might make himself known unto salvation, and bestowed the privilege on those whom he was pleased to bring into nearer and more familiar relation to himself...**For as...those whose sight is defective, when any books however fair, is set before them, though they perceive that there is something written are scarcely able to make out two consecutive words, but, when aided by glasses, begin to read distinctly, so **Scripture...dissipates the darkness, and shows us the true God clearly...by the addition of his Word, as a surer and more direct means of discovering himself.**” (*Institutes* 1.6.1)
 - “...in order that...its truth might subsist in the world during all ages, it was his pleasure that **the same oracles which he had deposited with the fathers should be consigned, as it were, to public records...**Therefore, while it becomes man seriously to employ his eyes in considering the works of God [in creation]...**his special duty is to give ear to the Word, that he may the better profit...**If true religion is to beam upon us, our principle must be, that **it is necessary to begin with heavenly teaching, and that it is impossible for any man to obtain even the minutest portion of right and sound doctrine without being a disciple of Scripture.**” (*Institutes* 1.6.2)

¹ If you don't have a copy, you may read it online for free here: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/institutes>

- "...if we reflect how prone the human mind is to lapse into forgetfulness of God, how readily inclined to every kind of error, how bent...on devising new and fictitious religions, it will be easy to understand **how necessary it was to make such a depository of doctrine as would secure it from either perishing by the neglect, vanishing away amid the errors, or being corrupted by the presumptuous audacity of men...God...has given the assistance of his Word...**if we aspire in earnest to a genuine contemplation of God;—**we must go, I say, to the Word...**[the] apostle declares to be inaccessible (1 Tim. 6:16), is a kind of...labyrinth to us inextricable, **if the Word do not serve us as a thread to guide our path...**" (*Institutes* 1.6.3)

What is the relation of our need for Scripture to growth in your knowledge of and relationship with the Holy Spirit?

VIEWS OF THE SPIRIT & HIS WORK

1) POWER: GOD-GIVEN ABILITY TO DO WHAT YOU OUGHT AND WANT TO DO (21–27)

1. The Positive

- List of New Testament texts that speak of the Spirit in terms of power (22–23)
- "...supernatural living through supernatural empowering is that the very heart of New Testament Christianity, so that those who, while professing faith, do not experience and show forth this empowering are suspect by New Testament standards...power from Christ through the Spirit is a theme that should always be given prominence whenever and wherever Christianity is taught" (23)

In what ways do we, with our focus on "ordinary means of grace," need to view the Spirit as power?

2. The Negative

- What was taught rightly by the 17th century **Puritans** was over-emphasized by 18th century **Methodism** in terms of "holiness" and "perfectionism" leading to an over-reaction of "antiperfectionist zeal [that] left Christians simply unaware that God has power to deliver sinful practices, to energize a calmly triumphant righteousness, and to give piercing efficacy to preachers' utterances." (24) This led to 19th–20th century **Higher Life** movements. The danger of over-emphasis on *power* has been "pietistic concentration of interest on the felt ups and downs of the soul" and "inner passivity, waiting for God's power" ("let go and let God").
- "But all this sounds more like an adaptation of yoga than like biblical Christianity" as it 1) "blurs the distinction between manipulating divine power at one's own will...and experiencing it as one obeys God's will" (26)² and as it 2) is not realistic in speaking of

² One of the books I read in college that encapsulates what Packer is talking about was R.A. Torrey, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1897). He said on page 37: "There is pointed out in the Bible a path, consisting of seven simple steps, which any one who will can take, and whoever takes these seven steps will, with absolute certainty, enter into this blessing." Then at the end of

“God’s power...immediately cancel[ing] out defects of character and mak[ing] our whole lives smooth sailing” (26–27).

2) PERFORMANCE: GOD-GIVEN SPIRITUAL GIFTS TO BE EXERCISED (27–33)

1. The Positive

- List of New Testament texts that speak of the reality of the Spirit’s gifts and the importance of putting them to use (28–29)

2. The Negative

- Magnifying lay ministry can undervalue ordained clergy

Why do we need to value ordained clergy?

- Magnifying the supernatural gifts given to those who did not have them before conversion can undervalue God’s gift of sanctifying another’s natural abilities
- Most importantly, the manifesting of personal gifts as if this were the Spirit’s main ministry is problematic as we see in 1 Corinthians.
 - The Corinthians were prideful, despised others, criticized those preachers they saw as less gifted, and tried to show off their gifts. “They were valuing gifts and freedom above righteousness, love, and service” (31).
 - They thought of themselves as “spiritual” but Paul labored to explain that this was ethical: the body is a temple of the Spirit, the way of love is more excellent. “...there can be *gifts* without *graces*.” (31) Thus, Christlikeness is what really matters.
 - “...any mind-set which treats the Spirit’s gifts...as more important than his fruit...is spiritually wrongheaded and needs correcting.” (33)

Since we have an ordained ministry as well as servants (elders & deacons), in what ways can we be guilty of not valuing the performance of gifts by all believers?

3) PURITY: GOD-GIVEN ONGOING CLEANSING FROM SIN’S POLLUTION (33–38)

1. The Positive

these steps he said on page 60, “Men have to wait only when they do not meet the conditions, when Christ is not fully accepted, or sin is not put away, or there is not total surrender, or true desire, or definite prayer, or simple faith, just taking upon the naked Word. The absence of some of these things keeps many waiting for more than ten days sometimes. But there is no need that any reader of this book wait ten hours. You can have the Baptism with the Holy Spirit just now, if you will.”

- List of Old/New Testament texts that speak of the Spirit’s progressively sanctifying us and enabling us to mortify sin (34–35)
 - In particular, note Romans 7:14–25 (cf. Gal. 5:17):
 - We’ve been freed from slavery to sin and now are free to live in love in the Spirit (7:6) and to mortify the deeds of the flesh by the Spirit (8:13); therefore there are two opposed desires in every believer
 - “The Christian who thus walks in the Spirit will keep discovering that nothing in this life is as good as it should be; that he has never fought as hard as he might have done against the clogging restraints and contrary pulls of his own inbred perversity; that there is an element of motivational sin, at least, in his best works; that his daily living is streaked with defilements, so that he has to depend every moment on God’s pardoning mercy in Christ, or he would be lost...” (37)
2. The Negative: legalism, pharisaic, scrupulous, joyless, morbid, pessimistic

How do you balance your optimism in the Spirit’s ability to sanctify with your practical pessimism as you see your own inabilities, failures, and struggles?

A MORE COMPREHENSIVE POINT OF VIEW

4) PRESENCE (47–54)

1. “...the Spirit makes known the personal presence...of the risen, reigning Saviour...” (47)
2. The New Testament emphasizes the Spirit’s ministry to mediate the presence of Christ.³
 - He is the Spirit of *Jesus* (Acts 16:7; Rom. 8:9; Gal. 4:6; Phil. 1:19; 1 Peter 1:11)
 - The Spirit who indwells us was in and upon Jesus (Luke 3:22; 4:1, 14, 18; 10:21; John 1:32; 3:34; Acts 10:38)
 - Jesus is the Spirit-giver (John 1:33; 15:26; 16:7; 20:22; Acts 2:33; 1 John 2:20, 27)
 - The Spirit’s coming to the disciples after Jesus’ ascension was in a real sense his return to them (John 14:16, 18–21)
 - The indwelling of the Spirit of God/Spirit of Jesus is described as the indwelling of Christ himself (Rom. 8:9–11)
 - The ascended Jesus’ messages to the churches is “what the Spirit says” (Rev. 2–3)
3. By “presence” we’re talking of *omnipresence*, but “*visitation*” to cause sinners realize their sins (Mal. 3:5) and his being “*with*” them to bless (Ex. 3:12; 33:14–16).

³ If you’d like to explore this theme more from the vantage point of the Heidelberg Catechism, see my “The Holy Spirit in the Heidelberg Catechism,” in [A Faith Worth Teaching: The Heidelberg Catechism’s Enduring Heritage](#), ed. Sebastian Heck and Jon Payne (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2013), 195–212.

4. When the Spirit “visits” us “with” Christ’s presence, he causes three things in us:
 - Personal fellowship with **Jesus**
 - Personal transformation of character into **Jesus’** likeness
 - Personal certainty of being adopted through **Jesus** into the Father’s family
5. Thus, knowing this presence appears as a twofold awareness:
 - “...that God is *there*: the objectively real Creator, Upholder, Master, and Mover of all that exists...the God who holds one, for good or ill, completely in his hands.” (50)
 - “...that God is *here*, having come close to address, question, and search us, to bring us low by exposing our weaknesses, sin and guilt, yet therewith to raise us up by his word of pardon and promise.” (50)

How does this point of view of the Spirit get your attention off your own experience of him or what he does for you? Instead, how does it get your attention onto *his* communion as God with the Father and Son and then onto *his* communication of the Father’s grace through the Son?

5) THE SPIRIT’S WORK OF MEDIATING THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST IN JOHN 16 (47–54)

⁵ **But now I am going in my ascension to him who sent me** and because I’m leaving ⁶ **sorrow has filled your heart.** ⁷ **Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away.**

- συμφέρω: used to denote helpful, beneficial, advantageous, profitable, useful⁴
 - Caiaphas: “it is *better* for you that one man should die...” (11:50; 18:14)
 - The Corinthians said “All things are lawful for me”; Paul said “but not all things are *helpful*.” (1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23)
 - Jesus said, “If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away...And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is *better* that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.” (Matt. 5:29–30)

Why?

for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you.

- παράκλητος (*paraklētos*): comforter, defender, encourager
- Earlier in 14:16 Jesus called him *allon paraklēton*: “another Helper”

⁴ *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Second edition, 1958; Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 780.

But if I go, I will send him to you.

⁸ **And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:** [Note how these were things Jesus did; now the Spirit will do]

⁹ **concerning sin, because they do not believe in me;**

¹⁰ **concerning [pretended] righteousness, because I go to the Father...**

¹¹ **concerning [false] judgment [about me], because the ruler of this world is judged.**

¹² **I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.** ¹³ **When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth** [of the things I still have to say to you]. How will he do this?

for he will not speak on his own authority [like Jesus; 5:19, 30; 7:17, 18; 8:28; 12:49; 14:10]

but whatever he hears he will speak...

¹⁴ **He will glorify me**—this “...gives us a comprehensive directional frame of reference within which the whole of the Spirit’s new covenant ministry should be seen...” (52)

How? **for he will take what is mine and declare it to you** [in the absence of Jesus]

¹⁵ **All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you**—note the Trinitarian focus: all the Father has is Jesus’ and all Jesus has is the Spirit’s

¹⁶ **A little while, and you will see me no longer**—because of his ascension

and again a little while, and you will see me—because of his sending of the Spirit

➤ In 14:18 Jesus said, “I will not leave you as orphans [in my ascension]; I will come to you.” How?

➤ In 14:19 Jesus said, “Yet a little while and the world will see me no more [because I’ll ascend], but you will see me.” How?



“...no account of the Holy Spirit...is fully Christian till it exhibits all his many-sided work from the standpoint of, on the one hand, the Father’s purpose that the Son be known, loved, honored, praised, and have preeminence in everything, and on the other hand, the Son’s promise to make himself present with his people, here and hereafter, by giving his Spirit to them.” (54)

