

DAILY DOSE OF DOCTRINE

April 7-11, 2008



April 7, 2008

Glorifying the Spirit

“(The Holy Spirit) will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you.”¹

As we turn from the ministry of Christ to that of the Holy Spirit, we turn from the ‘objective’ to the ‘subjective’, *“from the work which God accomplished for us in Christ and which is in its sacrificial aspect a finished work, to the work which He realizes as time goes on in the hearts and lives of believers, and in which they are permitted, and also expected, to co-operate.”²*

This subjective aspect of the Spirit’s work should cause us to be discerning. Until recently, it could be said with some truth that the Holy Spirit was the most neglected member of the Trinity. This is no longer the case. Renewal movements have done much to bless the Church by expanding our understanding of the person and work of the Spirit.

However, in focusing upon the Spirit, there is a tendency to glory in his works because it affords an opportunity for us to glorify ourselves. We humans struggle with the besetting sin of thinking that everything revolves around US. Dwelling upon the so-called ‘gifts’ of the Spirit, the guidance of the Spirit, our experiences of blessing, etc. can easily enable us to shine the spotlight on ourselves rather than upon our Lord.

It could be argued that the greatest evidence of being Spirit-filled is not when we focus on the work of the Spirit himself, but when we focus upon Christ. The Holy Spirit glories in glorifying Christ. When Jesus is at the center, we are most under-the-influence of the Spirit of God.

¹ John 16:14 (TNIV)

² Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, p. 423.

April 8, 2008 **The Life-Giving Spirit of God**

*“The Spirit of God has made me;
the breath of the Almighty gives me life....
If it were his intention
and he withdrew his spirit and breath,
all people would perish together
and would return to the dust.”¹*

In the Old Testament, the word ‘ruach’ has a variety of meanings, including ‘wind’, ‘breath’, ‘Spirit’ (of God) and ‘spirit’ (human). However, in general, it can be said the primary role of the Spirit is to bring or convey life.

At Creation, the Spirit of God hovered over the surface of the waters as a prelude to the life and order that God causes to arise out of chaos.² Later, God *“breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being”*.³ The Spirit of God thus conveyed life by creating the human spirit. The Spirit, as the life-sustained power of God, maintains life in Creation and, at his behest, withdraws life, returning us to ‘dust’. The withdrawal of his life-giving power means death.⁴

While these passages refer to the common grace of life-creation which we share with all God’s creatures, it could be said that all the work of the Spirit in both the Old and New Testaments is essentially that of creating or sustaining life. Empowering, giving talents and abilities, growing ‘fruit’, building faith – all of these are life-giving activities of the Spirit of God. Physical life and spiritual life both depend upon the working of the Holy Spirit.

¹ Job 33:4; 34:14-15

² Genesis 1:2

³ Genesis 2:7 (TNIV)

⁴ See also Psalm 104:29-30

April 9, 2008

The Spirit 'Upon'

"Then the Spirit of the LORD came on Jephthah. He crossed Gilead and Manasseh, passed through Mizpah of Gilead, and from there he advanced against the Ammonites."¹

Prior to Christ, the Holy Spirit was not given to all believers. Instead the Old Testament speaks of the Spirit as 'coming upon' various people for various activities that glorify God and bless his people:

- ▲ The Spirit came upon leaders like Samson and Jephthah to provide extraordinary daring, strength, power or leadership to deliver God's people in times of oppression.²
- ▲ He is credited with giving intellectual ability and wisdom to understand the problems of life.³
- ▲ The Spirit gave or heightened artistic and other abilities for the finer work of constructing the Tabernacle and creating the priests' garments.⁴
- ▲ He gave to certain people the ability to fulfill the requirements of various offices, such as the seventy who assisted Moses to rule over Israel and Saul and David in their role as kings.⁵
- ▲ He operated in the prophets as the Spirit of revelation, communicating messages from God.⁶

The Spirit graciously gave life to Israel through specific individuals or groups. But God promised a new covenant in which the Spirit would be poured out upon all⁷ so that all might experience God's grace.

¹ Judges 11:29 (TNIV)

² Judges 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25

³ Job 32:8

⁴ Exodus 28:3; 31:3; 35:30; Nehemiah 9:20

⁵ Numbers 11; 1 Samuel 10:6,10; 16:13-14

⁶ 2 Samuel 23:2; Ezekiel 11:24; Zechariah 7:12

⁷ Joel 2:28-32

April 10, 2008 **The Spirit of ‘Charis’ (Grace)**

"How much more severely do you think those deserve to be punished who have trampled the Son of God underfoot, who have treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who have insulted the Spirit of grace?"¹

Grace is the foundation of God's new covenant with us. We are saved "by grace through faith"². Jesus graciously paid the price of our sin upon the cross. The Holy Spirit takes the grace of Christ and works it out in our lives by creating saving faith and in a multitude of other ways.

In Scripture, 'grace' has a variety of meanings:

- ▲ In both Old and New Testaments, the words for 'grace'³ most often mean 'favour' or 'good-will'. They denote kindness that actively manifests itself in doing good to others, often freely and without merit on the part of the recipient.
- ▲ 'Charis', hearkening back to its original root of 'rejoicing', has a secondary meaning that points to the emotion awakened in the heart of the person who receives grace: gratitude and joyful thanksgiving.⁴
- ▲ It points to the transforming work of the Spirit. A gracious person, "full of grace and truth"⁵, is one whose character has been changed by the grace of God.

The work of the Spirit of Grace is to apply God's grace, from long before we come to faith until our earthly pilgrimage is over.

¹ Hebrews 12:29 (TNIV)

² Ephesians 2:8,9

³ Hebrew: 'chen'; Greek: 'charis'

⁴ Greek: 'eucharistos'; 1 Corinthians 10:30

⁵ Romans 3:24

April 11, 2008

The Spirit Calls

“But it is the spirit in mortals, the breath of the Almighty, that gives them understanding.”¹

Saving faith is the hand that grasps the gift of salvation. Without faith, salvation is offered, but not possessed by the individual.

Our experience might cause us to think that faith is OUR work – that we have come to the place where we trust God. But the Bible tells us that this is not the case. Faith itself is *“the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.”²* As a gracious gift the Spirit of God generates faith in the lives of those who, in due course, become believers. This preparatory work of the Spirit takes place in a variety of ways:

- ▲ He generates hunger for God. We may experience this as a need for forgiveness, a need to grasp the meaning of life, a longing to know where we ‘fit-in’; a need to be loved unconditionally. The Spirit sensitizes us to the ‘god-shaped vacuum’ in every human soul.
- ▲ He providentially orchestrates encounters with people/events/information that draw us to consider the claims of Christ.
- ▲ He provides spiritual insight as we encounter the Word in the Bible, preached, shared, etc.³
- ▲ He guides our thoughts as we grapple with all of these things until at some point the penny drops and faith reaches out to God.

While we speak casually of ‘our’ faith, closer inspection reveals the ‘fingerprints’ of the Spirit all over our response to God.

¹ Job 32:8 (TNIV) or KJV: “But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.”

² Ephesians 2:8b-9 (TNIV)

³ See 1 Corinthians 2:14