

2 TIMOTHY 1:7

THE SPIRIT GOD GAVE US

“God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.”¹

“**G**od gave us a spirit...” It is a truly divine mystery—the Spirit of God hallows the body of each believer. This tabernacle, this body of frail flesh that is even now decaying and passing away, is declared to be the Temple of God. The Apostle has written, “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” [1 CORINTHIANS 6:19, 20]. Glorify God in my body indeed!

We are taught that God presents Himself as a tripartite Being. When we speak about God or even address Him as God, our thinking often becomes quite fuzzy. For many Christians, we think of God the Father as God seated on His Throne, even if He is seen as somewhat detached. Though we speak of God the Son, claiming to believe that He is God, we do not always act as if He is God even though we tacitly acknowledge His deity. However, it is almost de rigueur to treat God the Spirit—the Third Person of the Trinity—as an influence rather than the Person He is. In short, the concept of the Triune God is difficult for us to grasp; and whatever our conception of God, that ideal tends to break apart when we begin to speak about the Holy Spirit.

I’ll be the first to confess that we preachers have done a poor job of teaching about the Trinity. We often gloss over the concept, giving the teaching short shrift. In fairness to my preacher brothers, the subject of God’s nature appears overwhelming as we attempt to communicate what is essentially the character of the Holy One in the short time available. I often feel restricted even if I take the full time I have allowed in these longer messages. Many pastors are trained to restrict themselves to twenty minutes or less. Candidly, I’m barely past my introduction after twenty minutes! Nevertheless, it is essential that we enable the saints to know God, equipping them to communicate the deep things of God to those they encounter. Our charge is to reveal God through His Word to those to whom we are sent.

The Apostle makes a fascinating statement that is easy to pass by if we aren’t careful. “God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control” [2 TIMOTHY 1:7]. That singular statement will be the focus of our study today. Please open your Bible to the passage and weigh the truths that God has provided in His Word.

GOD GAVE US A SPIRIT — The focus in this message will be the Holy Spirit, commonly referred to by theologians as the Third Person of the Trinity. In order to discuss this concept intelligently, we need to define “Person.” What do we mean when we sing the words voiced in the Doxology, “God in three Persons, blessed Trinity?” Intoning these ancient words, we are giving voice to a divinely revealed truth concerning God. Understand that whenever we speak about God, human language will always prove inadequate. Our language is based on time; and God is not bounded by time. Also, language carries physical and spatial connotations that cannot apply to God. And yet, we must use language to communicate what we know of God. One word that stands out as inadequate for describing the Triune God is the word “Person”; and yet, there is no better word.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible: English Standard Version**. Wheaton: Good News Publishers, 2001. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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Person is a finite term as the word is usually used. When we speak of God, we speak of one “what” and three “who’s.” The “what” is the Being or Essence of God. The three “who’s” are God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. There is one Person of the Father who is always the Father. There is one Person of the Son who is always the Son. And there is one Person of the Spirit who is always the Spirit.² Each of these Persons is distinct from the others, and yet all are one in essence and purpose. Each of the Persons—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—is fully and truly God; thus, the three are perfectly one in the identity of their nature. In speaking of the Trinity, then, we encounter three Persons in one Being.

God is One, as Moses declared: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one” [DEUTERONOMY 6:4]. That is to say, there is but one God. We do not worship three gods, for God has revealed Himself as One. Jesus declared as He prayed, “This is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” [JOHN 17:3].

However, though God is one, He frequently speaks of Himself in the plural. This is especially evident in the Creation account. Let’s look at the account of the creation of mankind. “God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth’” [GENESIS 1:26]. God (singular) spoke, but He used the plural in speaking of the creation of mankind.

Some have speculated that God spoke to angels who are presumed to have been present. We can dismiss such speculation. First, there is no indication that angels were involved in creation other than to have perhaps sung to the glory of God near the end of the Creation Week.³ Again, where is it recorded that God ever invited inferior entities to join in His creative work? Others have suggested that God was using the plural of majesty at this point. However, if that is so, it does not fit with the character of God as revealed throughout the entirety of the Old Covenant. God does not speak in stilted or self-aggrandising language elsewhere in the Bible. Why should we imagine that He does so here? No, it seems best to understand that God is speaking within the Godhead as the Triune God as He prepares to create mankind.

After the fall of our first parents, we again see this language of the One God speaking in the plural. “The LORD God said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever...’” [GENESIS 3:22]. Note that Yahweh, the One True God speaks; and yet, Yahweh says, “The man has become like *one of us*.”

Yet another passage in Genesis to consider is found in the account of the judgement at Babel. “The LORD said, ‘Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another’s speech.’” So the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city” [GENESIS 11:6-8]. Again, it is the LORD GOD who speaks; and yet, His concern is that the man may become as *they* are.

² Though many fine studies are available, for further study, I commend consulting any or all of the following tomes: Thomas F. Torrance, **The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons** (T&T Clark, Edinburgh, Scotland 1996); or Millard J. Erickson, **God in Three Persons: A Contemporary Interpretation of the Trinity** (Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI 1995); or Millard J. Erickson, **Making Sense of the Trinity: 3 Crucial Questions** (Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI 2000); or Colin E. Gunton, **The Promise of Trinitarian Theology**, 2nd ed., rev. and expanded (T&T Clark, London, New York 2006); or R. C. Sproul, **What is the Trinity?** (Reformation Trust, Orlando, FL 2011)

³ See **JOB 38:4-7**

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Let me point out one final reference, though many can be adduced. The Word informs us that the LORD advised Abraham of the destruction of Sodom. Listen to the extended passage. “The LORD appeared to [Abraham] by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth and said, ‘O Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree, while I bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant.’ So they said, ‘Do as you have said’” [GENESIS 18:1-5].

Note that the LORD is identified as appearing to Abraham [VERSE 1]. However, when he looks up, he sees three men [VERSE 2]. However, when Abraham speaks, he addresses the visitors in the singular, “O Lord” [VERSE 3]; then, in the verse following Abraham speaks in the plural. The alternation continues throughout the narrative. Abraham repeatedly speaks to “the LORD” [VERSES 10, 13, 14, 17, 19, 22], and then refers “the men” [VERSES 16, 22].

Let’s ensure clarity by noting that when speaking of the Trinity, we are not speaking of three gods—that is polytheism. Neither are we speaking of God expressing Himself in three different ways—that is modalism. Neither are we suggesting inequality between the Persons of the Trinity—that is subordinationism of one form or another. God presents Himself in the Word as One God in Three Persons, equal in essence, in power, in purpose. We must be balanced in our study of the Triune God. While the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are distinct Persons with unique attributes, the distinctions are not essential—that is, the distinctions are not distinctions of essence. We must not permit ourselves to become sloppy in our thinking about God.

My focus in this message is the Spirit of God, so let’s turn our attention to Him. Throughout Scripture, God’s Spirit is witnessed acting as God acts, doing the things that God does. For instance, the Spirit of God was active in creation. As the Creation Account unfolds, we read, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters” [GENESIS 1:1, 2].

The Spirit of God is witnessed giving life. Note a couple of instances in the Word where the Spirit of God is seen giving life. Of God’s Spirit, the Psalmist has written:

“When you send forth your Spirit, they are created,
and you renew the face of the ground.”

[PSALM 104:30]

The Psalm is addressed to the LORD God [see PSALM 104:1], and throughout, the Psalmist speaks of all that God does. It is important to note that he states that God creates by the Spirit.

Elihu, the young man who rebuked Job’s comforters by insisting that they look at matters from God’s perspective, said,

“If [God] should set his heart to it
and gather to himself his Spirit and his breath,
all flesh would perish together,
and man would return to dust.”

[JOB 34:14, 15]

His statement testifies to the creative work and to the sustaining work of God's Spirit.

Because the Holy Spirit creates and gives life, it should be no surprise that He also gives new life. The statements cited from the Old Testament anticipate the revelations from the New Testament concerning the Spirit's work. Jesus said, "It is the Spirit who gives life" [JOHN 6:63]. This affirmation of the life-giving work of the Spirit was echoed by the Apostle when he wrote, "The Spirit gives life; the flesh is no help at all" [2 CORINTHIANS 3:6].

In this context, it is worth remembering that the Holy Spirit conceived Jesus in Mary's womb. You recall that in the announcement to Mary that God had chosen her to bear Messiah, Gabriel said, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God" [LUKE 1:35].

Even more pointed language is recorded when the angel of the Lord spoke with Joseph. "The birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit'" [MATTHEW 1:18-20].

Just as the Spirit creates and gives new life to those who are regenerated in Christ, so He will give resurrection life to our mortal bodies at the return of our Lord Jesus. This truth is emphasised in the testimony that has been provided by the Apostle Paul. "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" [ROMANS 8:11].

In the text before us this day, we read, "God gave us a Spirit." We who are twice-born accept that this is a reference to the Holy Spirit. As He prepared to depart this mortal realm, Jesus made a startling promise to His disciples. "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you" [JOHN 14:15-20].

Moreover, the Master informed His disciples of the work in which the Spirit would be engaged when He came. "These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" [JOHN 14:25, 26].

Shortly after saying this, Jesus spoke again of the work of His Spirit in the world. "I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you" [JOHN 16:7-15].

The Spirit of God will work in Jesus' disciples to instruct them and to remind them of all the Master has said. The expansion of Jesus' initial statement was that the Spirit would serve as a divine guide for the disciples, directing them into truth and pointing out what lay ahead. Above all else, the Holy Spirit would glorify the Son and the Father.

In a broader sense in the world, the Spirit of God works to convict the lost of sin, of righteousness and of judgement. He does this through energising the witness of disciples and through empowering the declaration of truth as the Word proclaimed. The Spirit of God works through the written Word, convicting those who read what God has caused to be written and by drawing those who are appointed to life to believe in the Living Son of God.

We have a tendency to pass by rather quickly the implications of what is written concerning the Spirit of God. I want to take just a moment to address the Spirit's ministry of teaching. We live in a day of experts. Many people believe themselves unqualified to teach their children about Christ, or to speak with their neighbours about the salvation offered in Christ the Lord. We defer to those who occupy the pulpits as experts, never questioning what is said. Perhaps a preacher makes a statement that just doesn't sound right, but we tell ourselves that we are not experts—we don't read the original languages, we haven't studied theology, we didn't spend years in that course of study—so we can't respond. Rather than challenge what is said, we quietly walk away rather than seek clarification or attempting to correct what is errant.

We need to be reminded that addressing His people, God has spoken through the Apostle, "I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him" [1 JOHN 2:26, 27]. It is the decided privilege of each believer to be "taught by God" [see JOHN 6:45]. Those who have learned this lesson will be ready to listen to what God has taught others. They will not be arrogant; rather, they will be humble as they seek to know the Lord.

I can only touch on all that the Spirit of God does among the people of God. However, we need to know that *the Spirit of God interprets Scripture to God's people*. Paul says that the Spirit reveals to us the things of God, teaching us spiritual truths [see 1 CORINTHIANS 2:6-14].

God's Spirit teaches us about the Lord Jesus. Jesus promised, "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me" [JOHN 15:26; see also JOHN 16:13-15].

The Spirit raised Christ from the dead [ROMANS 1:4; 8:11].

The Spirit of God leads us, just as He led Jesus [MATTHEW 4:1].

The Holy Spirit guides us in worship. Paul writes, "We are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh" [PHILIPPIANS 3:3].

It is the Spirit of God who teaches us how to offer praise acceptable to God. We read, "Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" [EPHESIANS 5:18-20].

God's Spirit intercedes for us and teaches us to pray. Paul writes, "The Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God" [ROMANS 8:26, 27]. Therefore, we are urged to be always "praying in the Holy Spirit" [JUDE 20].

Jesus promised that *the Spirit would speak through His child in the time of trial*. Remember His promise. “Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you” [MATTHEW 10:17-20].

The Christian knows that he is *not even capable of calling Jesus “Lord,” except that the Holy Spirit should enable him to do so* [see 1 CORINTHIANS 12:3].

I anticipate that each child of God shall ultimately prove victorious. Each Christian is *enabled to bear fruit because the Spirit of God is at work in her life or in his life*. Think of just a few of the precious promises that speak of the Spirit working to grow fruit in us. “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” [ROMANS 5:5].

“The law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death” [ROMANS 8:2].

“If Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 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.

“Brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 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. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God” [ROMANS 8:10-14].

Of course, He is developing fruit in our lives. We have no doubt read Paul’s words that, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” [GALATIANS 5:22-24].

The descent of the Spirit after Jesus had ascended into the heavens was dramatic. Working in the life of a disciple, He is seldom as dramatic; but His work does reveal divine guidance and power. The disciples engaged in ten days of prayer after Jesus’ ascension. Doctor Luke provides the account of the fulfilment of Jesus’ promise to send the Helper. “When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance” [ACTS 2:1-4].

Since that day, the Spirit of God has lived in—*in* and not nearby—God’s holy people. God’s Spirit dwells in the church. Writing the Corinthian congregation, Paul wrote of the Corinthian congregation, “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple” [1 CORINTHIANS 3:16, 17].

The divine warning against destroying the Temple of God is not to be taken as a warning against self-destruction—it is a divine warning against harming the congregation of the Lord. Whenever a congregation unites to do the work that Christ Jesus assigned, the Spirit of God works within that congregation. As we of this assembly carry out our responsibilities throughout the week, the Spirit of God is always working among us, bringing to fruition the divine plans for the congregation and doing that holy work that God has assigned.

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Of the congregation of the Lord, Paul has written, “You are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit” [EPHESIANS 2:19-22].

However, in an even more personal sense, the Holy Spirit lives within each believer. Paul also wrote in this same letter, “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” [1 CORINTHIANS 6:19, 20].

We are tripartite beings (we *are* created in the image of God, we bear the triune nature). We possess a body, we are eternal souls and we have a spirit. By nature, our spirit is dead until it is made alive in Christ. Our soul is condemned because of our inability to redeem ourselves from our fallen condition. And our body is under sentence of death because of the ruin resulting from the sin of our first parents. Born from above, God gives us a new spirit which is alive to Him and which permits us to know Him and to approach Him. In fact, the Spirit that He gives us is the Holy Spirit, just as Jesus promised. God saves our soul, delivering us from the sentence of death and the presence of His Spirit living within our body is the guarantee of the resurrection [see 2 CORINTHIANS 1:21, 22].

Pointedly addressing the idea that the body of each Christian is a living temple of the Spirit and that collectively we form a temple wherein the Spirit of God dwells, Paul has written, “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said,

‘I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them,
and I will be their God,
and they shall be my people.’”

[2 CORINTHIANS 6:14-16]

God gave us a Spirit—and what a Spirit He gave us! This is the heritage of the people of God. This is not the heritage of a select few, nor is it the heritage of some specialised elite within Christendom—this is the heritage of each believer in Christ the Son. Twice-born Christians *now* possess the Spirit of God. The vital question to each one who names the Name of Christ is whether the Spirit of God possesses us. This is the reason we urge each child of God to recognise the serious responsibility to be holy and to walk by the Spirit. We have been taught, “Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do” [GALATIANS 5:16, 17].

WHAT GOD’S SPIRIT IS NOT — “God gave us a spirit *not of fear*.” We who know the Lord fear God; but we are not afraid of God. We revere Him, knowing His power. We tremble at the thought that we could dishonour Him, bringing reproach to His Name. However, in this world, we do not live in fear. Fear is incompatible with love, and God is love. We are taught by the Word, “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love” [1 JOHN 4:18].

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Once, we lived in deplorable slavery; we cowered in abject fear. Paul reminds us of this dark period and of the difference in Christian lives now when he informs the Romans, “You did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him” [ROMANS 8:15-17].

Once, each of us was under condemnation. What was worse, we knew we were condemned. That awful sentence that John pronounced applied to us. “Whoever believes in [Jesus] is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed” [JOHN 3:18-20]. The frightful sentence hung over us; but God’s Spirit opened our heart and we learned the truth written in the remainder of that divine promise. “Whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God” [JOHN 3: 21].

Christ Jesus gave His life as a sacrifice to deliver those who once lived in fear. A most powerful statement concerning our deliverance has been given in the Letter to Hebrew Christians. “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery” [HEBREWS 2:14, 15].

The one who now follows the Master no longer is fearful of what man can do. He has heard the Master when he says, “I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him” [LUKE 12:4, 5]! And the one who fears God need no longer free the evil one.

On one occasion while I was still teaching in Dallas, I was invited to assist a pastor of two small churches in Kansas. I travelled to Kansas, arriving at the house of that pastor late on a Saturday afternoon. The pastor and his wife welcomed me and showed me every courtesy. We had finished the evening meal and were speaking of Christ and His mercies. The wife was telling me of her battle with cancer and how God had graciously spared her life. As we talked, however, she fixed her husband with an intense stare and whispered in a timorous voice, “Stanley, have you warned Mike? Because it’s back.”

“Don’t worry about Mike,” that pastor said. “He’s mature; he can handle it.” I might mention that Mike was thinking, “Whoa! Don’t be so sure Mike can handle it—whatever ‘it’ is.”

Suddenly that gracious lady’s countenance was transformed into a most hideous masque. A voice began to speak, but it wasn’t her voice. The voice mouthed foul blasphemies cursing God and slandering Jesus. My astonishment threatened to give way at any moment to panic. Her husband was commanding the spirit to leave the woman and return whence it had come. As he called on Jesus, the demon shrieked, pleading that he no longer mention that Name. I prayed, asking God to free this woman and to protect the family. And soon, much sooner than I could have expected, a peace descended on the little house on the Kansas prairie. Regaining strength, the lady told me her story. In desperation at the diagnosis of the physicians who treated her cancer and who had done all they could, and who informed her there would be no cure, she sought out a group that broadcast their services on radio, claiming that they could heal diseases.

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The “healer” told her that she needed to be filled with the “holyghost”—that’s how he said it, “holyghost”—in order to be healed. She was desperate; so, she opened herself to the spirit world. She did speak in a strange language and she was healed of the cancer; but there was a cost for the healing. A presence invaded her life; she was compelled to speak in tongues at inopportune times. Gradually, her life was commandeered by the presence who shortly demonstrated itself to be malevolent and vile. Soon, the baleful spirit ceased speaking in strange languages, and began to speak in English, uttering its foul imprecations against Christ. The experience was no longer pleasant; it was terrifying. Now, some years later, she had become a virtual recluse, confined to her home in fear of the presence that now controlled her life.

Soon, it was time for bed and I lay down. I was thinking, “Sure, after what I’ve witnessed I’ll just close my eyes and go to sleep!” However, the Word of God flooded my mind and I remembered the promise of God, “God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.” My prayer that night was very simple. “God, the fear I feel is not from you; rebuke my fear for Your Name’s sake. The Spirit You have given supplies power and love and self-control. Let Your Spirit now control my mind. You have promised to give Your beloved sleep. If I am to honour You tomorrow, I must have rest. Let Your peace surround my life.” And I slept peacefully, arising refreshed on the next day, preaching with power.”

God’s peace, supplied in abundance in the midst of turmoil, is promised to all His saints. I have often recalled the promise provided in the Psalms:

“In peace I will both lie down and sleep;
for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.”

[PSALM 4:8]

GOD’S SPIRIT WORKING IN US — “God gave us ... a spirit of power and love and self-control.” The Spirit God put within us is a Spirit of power. This is power to glorify God. This is power to follow Christ our Lord fully. The Spirit God gives empowers us to hate sin with a holy hatred, turning from wickedness in order to pursue righteousness. This power enables us to fulfil the will of God, standing firm in His grace. Through the power of the Spirit who dwells within, we can say, “I can do all things through him who strengthens me” [PHILIPPIANS 4:13].

This powerful Spirit enables the believer to live godly [cf. 2 TIMOTHY 3:5] or to endure hardship [see 2 TIMOTHY 1:8]. This divine power enables the reticent to speak with boldness and equips the fearful to stand firm in the face of wickedness, refusing to retreat from righteousness. This divine power enables the one who was once crass to display gentleness as he ministers to a wounded soul, telling that one of the love of Christ the Lord.

Reading the Scriptures in the Synagogue in Nazareth one day Jesus Himself announced that He had fulfilled the words of Isaiah. In the same manner, the Spirit of God works in the life of each believer in whom He dwells so that they also can say,

“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor;
he has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.”

[ISAIAH 61:1]

We do not ourselves provide the liberty, but we bring good news and we proclaim liberty and we announce the opening of prison doors to those who hear our message.

The power of the Spirit who dwells within is always blended with love. The Spirit-filled believer does not allow faux love to guide her life—that false love that seems so common in our world and that says to the sinful, “I love you too much to say anything that would hurt you.” The love that infuses the life of God’s child is a love that enables the believer to seize the admonition that teaches, “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” [**ROMANS 12:21**].

Therefore, the Spirit-filled child of God seeks to honour God and to do good to all people. Walking in the Spirit, the child of God pities the sinful—not looking down on those bound by sin with an air of superiority, but rather viewing the sinful with genuine sorrow at the hurt and injury that has blinded the eyes and wounded the lost individual.

I recall the horror I experienced when a mother begged me to intervene to rescue her teenage son who had left home to begin living in a wicked situation. I remonstrated with that mother, reminding her of her obligation as the mother of the young boy. “Oh,” she protested, “I could never say ‘No’ to the lad. I don’t want to hurt him.”

I reminded her that a mere moment before she had confessed that she knew the young man was destroying himself. “Yes,” she responded, “but I just love him too much to hurt him. I believe he is like a beautiful tree in winter. Though there are no leaves on it, in the spring the tree will bud and leaves will again come out.”

I was horrified! “Woman,” I expostulated, “you don’t love that boy! You hate his soul! The heart of that tree is dead, and at the first wind the tree will fall. Your child is dead and your refusal to speak the truth in love condemns him to death and condemns your own heart to grief.”

At last, the Spirit God has given us ensures that we act with self-control. Whenever someone tells me, “I couldn’t help myself,” I know they cannot be speaking of an action that is guided by the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God will always lead the Spirit-filled individual to “walk with integrity of heart within [his] house” [**see PSALM 101:2b**].

If talk of the fullness of the Spirit seems mysterious to you, is it because you have never known God or His Spirit? You must be born from above in order to know the Spirit and to know His presence. If you would know the power of the Spirit, if you would know the love of the Spirit, or if you would know the self-control that the Spirit gives, you must be filled with the Spirit. If you are a Christian, I would urge you to “fan into flame the gift of God,” the Spirit who lives within your life. The people of God must not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, and they will not be ashamed if they fan into flame the gift that is in each Christian.

Are you a Christian? Do you know that your sins are forgiven? Are you a twice-born child of the True and Living God? The message of life is that Christ the Son of God gave His life as a sacrifice because of sin. He was buried and by the power of the Spirit He broke the bonds of death and rose from the dead. Jesus is alive! And He now invites as many as are willing to believe this Good News. The Word of God invites all who will receive it, “If you openly confess that Jesus is Master of your life, agreeing with God that He has been raised from the dead, you shall be set at liberty. One believes this truth resulting in a right standing with the Father and openly agrees with God resulting in freedom.” That promise is iterated when the Apostle cites the Prophet Joel, “Everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord will be set free” [**see ROMANS 10:9-13**].

Believe this message and be free. Amen.