

We Believe in the Holy Spirit

LESSON
ONE

IN THE TRINITY



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Lesson One

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INTRODUCTION

I once heard a story about a man who was injured in an accident and lost his memory. He forgot every detail of his life: his name, his friends, even his family. It took him months to recover from his injuries. And during that time, he was tended to most faithfully by one particular nurse. At first, he only knew her as “nurse.” But he soon learned her name, and then her schedule, and then her personality. He grew to care for her, and they often spent time together, just laughing and talking. One day, during one of these visits, the man’s memory returned, and he suddenly recognized the nurse. To their delight, he exclaimed, “I remember you. You’re my wife!” And of course, she was.

In some ways, this story is a bit like the relationship between the Holy Spirit and God’s people. God’s Holy Spirit has always loved his people and cared for them faithfully. But in the Old Testament, they didn’t even know who he was. It wasn’t until the New Testament that Jesus began to reveal the Holy Spirit as a distinct person within the Trinity, and as the person of the Godhead who’s most intimately involved in our lives.

This is our first lesson in the series *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*. And we’ve entitled it “In the Trinity.” In this lesson, we’ll focus on the Holy Spirit as a full and equal member of the Godhead.

In systematic theology, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is referred to as “pneumatology.” The word “pneumatology” comes from two Greek roots: *pneuma*, meaning “spirit,” and *logos*, meaning “study.” So, in a broad sense, “pneumatology” refers to “the study of spirits” or “the study of spiritual things.” But in Christian theology, pneumatology has a much narrower meaning. Specifically, it refers to “the study of the Holy Spirit,” the third person of the Trinity.

Historically, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as a distinct, uncreated person of the Trinity took millennia to develop. This was due largely to the fact that God chose to reveal this aspect of his being over time. And as God revealed more and more of himself, we began to develop a fuller understanding of his Trinitarian nature. Traditionally, systematic theologians have defined the Trinity by saying:

God has three persons, but only one essence.

By the term “person,” we mean a distinct, self-aware personality. And by the term “essence,” we’re referring to God’s being, his fundamental nature, or the substance of which he consists.

The doctrine of the Trinity was hinted at in the Old Testament, but only the person of the Father was expressed with much clarity. In the New Testament, all three persons of the Trinity were fully revealed: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And the nature of their relationship with each other was also defined. Finally, in the early church, all those

details were formulated into theological doctrines that Christians have embraced ever since.

In this lesson on the Holy Spirit in the Trinity, we'll explore the historical development of pneumatology in three steps. First, we'll see how the Holy Spirit appears in the Old Testament. Second, we'll look at what the New Testament teaches about him. And third, we'll consider the formalized doctrine of the Holy Spirit in church history. Let's look first at how the Holy Spirit was revealed in the Old Testament.

OLD TESTAMENT

Now, we know that God has always existed in Trinity. And the personal distinctions between the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit have always been true of him. All three persons are, and always have been, uncreated and fully God. But during the days of the Old Testament, God's people didn't understand that God existed in three persons. They simply knew and worshiped him as the one true God. Of course, we can see hints throughout the Old Testament that the Holy Spirit is a distinct person. But it's only with the clarity of the New Testament that we can recognize these hints.

The 20th century theologian B.B. Warfield, who lived 1851–1921, compared the Old Testament to a room that's richly furnished but poorly lit. He said that when we introduce better lighting, it doesn't change what's in the room. It simply enables us to see the things that were already there. Listen to how Warfield applied this idea to the Trinity in his work *The Biblical Doctrine of the Trinity*, published in 1915:

The mystery of the Trinity is not revealed in the Old Testament; but the mystery of the Trinity underlies the Old Testament revelation, and here and there almost comes into view. Thus the Old Testament revelation of God is not corrected by the fuller revelation which follows it, but only perfected, extended and enlarged.

God didn't reveal himself as the Trinity in the Old Testament — at least not in a way that his people could recognize clearly. Even so, because God really does exist in Trinity, and because the Old Testament really does reveal him, the Old Testament contains clues about the Trinity. And when we read the Old Testament with the insight we gain from the New Testament, we can see these clues more clearly.

So, the Old Testament is telling us the story of God's work in preparation for the coming of the Savior, of the Messiah. And it does that by describing God's work by means of the Spirit of God, by means of the Son of God in Psalm 2 for example. And so, you find all through the Old Testament an introduction, not only of God's name but God's work associated with his name. But when God works, he works in multiple forms in the text. So, the language of God being multiple, where there are more than one identification of how this

work is being done, either by means of his Son or by means of his word in Psalm 33, or by means of his Spirit, introduces the idea of there being multiple persons in the Godhead, without having to be explicit about that. The New Testament picks up right where the Old Testament leaves off. It focuses on God's work in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and at Jesus' baptism the Father, the Son and the Spirit all appear together. So, there's not a modalism where these are just names that are attributed to the same person or the same individual. The Father and the Son and the Spirit are distinct persons, and the New Testament is able to take all of the terms and the work of God that's promised in the Old Testament, bring it to fruition and to fulfillment, so they work together by introducing the ideas and the work of God and the name of God as well as the Son and the Spirit and then the New Testament brings it together in fullness to give us a doctrine of the Trinity.

— Dr. Steve McKinion

There are many ways to investigate the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament. But for our purposes, we'll focus on the Old Testament's references to God's Spirit, and on how those references indicate the Spirit's divinity or deity, and his personhood. Let's look first at some Old Testament references to God's Spirit.

SPIRIT

The Old Testament uses several names for God's Spirit, including "Holy Spirit," "Spirit of God," "Spirit of the Lord," and, sometimes, when God is speaking, "my Spirit." In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word we translate as "spirit" is *ruach*. In general terms, *ruach* can refer to a variety of things. It can be wind or breath. In animals, it can be the principle of life that animates them. In human beings, our *ruach* is often our immortal soul. *Ruach* can also refer to spirits that don't have material bodies. But when used of God, it's generally either a synonym for God himself, or it refers to his personal presence and active engagement with creation.

In the names "Spirit of God," "my Spirit," and "Spirit of the Lord," *ruach* is combined with a name or pronoun for God, indicating that God's Spirit is associated with God in some way, or that it actually *is* God. And the Old Testament name "Holy Spirit" couples *ruach* with the Hebrew word *qodesh*, meaning "holiness." God's *qodesh* or "holiness" is his "otherness" or "apartness" — his quality of being different from his creation. It includes things like his absolute moral purity, as well as the splendor of his appearance. The same word is also reflected in other names for God, like "the Holy One," as we see in places like 2 Kings 19:22, Isaiah 30:11-15, and Hosea 11:9-12.

It can be tempting for Christians to think that these Old Testament names refer directly to the third person of the Trinity. But we need to remember that God didn't explain his existence in three persons until the New Testament. So, in the Old Testament,

these names refer to God without clearly distinguishing between his persons. Even so, these names helped prepare God's people to learn about the Trinity in the New Testament. And, in light of the New Testament's teaching, theologians have commonly applied these references to the Holy Spirit's nature and work.

Having looked at some Old Testament names for God's Spirit, let's see how these names demonstrate the Spirit's divinity or deity.

DIVINITY

When we speak of the Holy Spirit's divinity or deity, we have in mind that the Spirit is actually the uncreated God, and not simply one of God's agents. As we've said, Old Testament references to God's Spirit sometimes identify God himself, and sometimes describe his engagement with creation. But in both cases, they point to his eternal, uncreated divinity.

We'll consider four Old Testament characteristics of God's Spirit that point to his divinity, beginning with references that equate the Spirit with God himself.

God himself

Let's look first at a passage written by the prophet Isaiah. After describing the ways God had saved and redeemed Israel, Isaiah criticized the way Israel had responded to God. Listen to what he wrote in Isaiah 63:10:

They rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit. So he turned and became their enemy and he himself fought against them (Isaiah 63:10).

Isaiah applied the name Holy Spirit to God himself, probably to emphasize that God's holiness was what caused him to take offense at their sin. This is similar to the grieving of the Holy Spirit that Paul warned against in Ephesians 4:30. And in response, God punished his people by fighting against them. And listen to how Isaiah continued in 63:11-14:

Then his people recalled the days of old, the days of Moses and his people — where is he who brought them through the sea ... who set his Holy Spirit among them, who sent his glorious arm of power to be at Moses' right hand, who divided the waters before them, to gain for himself everlasting renown, who led them through the depths? ... [T]hey were given rest by the Spirit of the Lord. This is how you guided your people to make for yourself a glorious name (Isaiah 63:11-14).

Isaiah referred to the miracles God had performed when he rescued Israel from Egypt. These included dividing the Red Sea, allowing the Israelites to cross unharmed,

and drowning Pharaoh's army. These miracles are also recorded in Exodus 14, 15. In Exodus 15:3-6, Moses wrote:

The Lord is a warrior; the Lord is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his army he has hurled into the sea... Your right hand, O Lord, was majestic in power. Your right hand, O Lord, shattered the enemy (Exodus 15:3-6).

Here, it's clear that the Lord himself performed these works. So, when Isaiah attributed them to God's "Holy Spirit" and to the "Spirit of the Lord" in Isaiah 63, he intended his original audience to interpret these as names for God himself.

In addition, when Moses spoke of God's "right hand" winning the victory, he was using metaphoric language that compared God to a human warrior. And his point was that God himself had directly entered and won the battle. In the same way, when Isaiah later equated God's Holy Spirit to God's arm, he meant that God himself was invisibly present as a warrior fighting on behalf of his people.

And something similar is often true of the name "Spirit of God." For instance, in Genesis 1:2, the Spirit of God hovered over the waters at creation. In Job 33:4, the Spirit of God is the creator of human beings. And in Psalm 106:32, 33, he is God, the Lord, against whom the Israelites rebelled and grumbled at Meribah. In these and many other places, the context identifies or equates the Spirit of God with God himself.

Through the activities of the Holy Spirit, which we read about in the Old Testament, we become sure that he is God. For example, his role in creation: In Genesis 1, Moses never wrote that the Holy Spirit was created. On the contrary, he said that the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. The idea here is that he was embracing the creation like a bird embraces its nestlings, and he was giving life and power to the creation. The same idea is found in Psalm 104, which says, "When you send forth your Spirit, they are created." The Holy Spirit has the ability to create, and this proves that he is God himself.

— Rev. Dr. Emad A. Mikhail, translation

And the same thing applies to the name the "Spirit of the Lord," using God's covenant name "Yahweh" in place of the more generic name "God." In addition to referring to God in Isaiah 63:14, as we just saw, it also refers to him in Micah 2:7, and arguably in several other passages too.

And the simple phrase "my Spirit" also directly identifies God himself. In Genesis 6:3, it speaks of God contending with humanity. And in Haggai 2:5, God spoke of remaining present with his covenant people through his Spirit.

A second fact that points to the divinity of God's Spirit in the Old Testament is that the Spirit empowered prophecy and visions.

Prophecy and visions

When the Spirit of God inspired Old Testament prophecies and visions, he often revealed knowledge that only God could possess. And he also delegated authority to the prophets to speak on God's behalf. And in some cases, God's Spirit even controlled the spirits of human prophets in spectacular ways, very similar to the Holy Spirit's gift of prophecy in the New Testament. In all these situations, it's reasonable to conclude that the Spirit of God was actually God himself.

The Spirit's divine authority and power are demonstrated this way in 1 Samuel 19:20-24, where Saul and his men were temporarily given the gift of prophecy. It's also evident in 2 Chronicles 24:20, where the prophet Zechariah was empowered to speak God's words on his behalf. And it's apparent in Ezekiel 11:24, where the Spirit of God gave Ezekiel a prophetic vision.

But one of the most dramatic movements of the Spirit of God happened to the wicked prophet Balaam in the book of Numbers. Throughout Numbers 22–24, Balaam was willing to curse Israel on behalf of their enemy Balak, king of Moab. But Balaam admitted that he could only curse Israel if the Lord permitted it. And contrary to Balak and Balaam's intentions, the only prophecies Balaam could deliver were blessings on Israel. God so overwhelmed Balaam that the prophet was incapable of saying anything God hadn't commanded. In Numbers 24:2-4, we find this record of Balaam's encounter with the Spirit of God:

When Balaam looked out and saw Israel encamped tribe by tribe, the Spirit of God came upon him and he uttered his oracle: "The oracle of Balaam ... the oracle of one who hears the words of God, who sees a vision from the Almighty" (Numbers 24:2-4).

The Spirit of God provided Balaam with the words of God and a vision from the Almighty. This explained why Balaam failed to curse Israel — God himself provided the words that Balaam was compelled to speak.

Like the "Spirit of God," the "Spirit of the Lord" was also the source of prophecies, indicating that this name could also refer directly to God. In Numbers 11:29, Moses revealed that the Lord's Spirit was the source of his own prophetic gift, as well as of the gifts of other Israelite prophets. In Ezekiel 11:5, the Spirit of the Lord put God's words in the mouth of the prophet Ezekiel. And David's last words before his death directly equate the Spirit of the Lord with the God of Israel himself. Listen to what David said in 2 Samuel 23:2-3:

**The Spirit of the Lord spoke through me; his word was on my tongue.
The God of Israel spoke, the Rock of Israel said to me ... (2 Samuel 23:2-3)**

Here, the parallelism of David's poetry suggests that the Spirit of the Lord and the God of Israel are one and the same.

Finally, God himself used the name “my Spirit” to describe the pouring out of the spiritual gift of prophecy on all his people during the last days. In Joel 2:28-29, God said:

I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days (Joel 2:28-29).

In Acts 2:1-29, the apostle Peter taught that this prophecy was fulfilled when God poured out the Holy Spirit on the church at Pentecost. In other words, Joel’s Old Testament reference to God’s Spirit ultimately refers to the person of the Holy Spirit. Again, this doesn’t mean that Joel’s prophecy explicitly declared the existence of the third person of the Trinity. But it does mean that the Spirit in Joel’s prophecy was none other than God himself.

The third Old Testament characteristic that points to the divinity or deity of God’s Spirit is that he imparted special skill and knowledge to select human beings.

Special skill and knowledge

In the Old Testament, God’s Spirit supernaturally gifted certain human beings to perform ministry tasks. For example, in Exodus 31:3 and 35:31, God filled the craftsmen Bezalel and Oholiab with his Spirit so that they could craft the tabernacle and its furnishings. The idea was that God personally blessed them with enhanced abilities and knowledge to ensure that their work would please him. This was particularly important because, according to Exodus 25:9, 40, the craftsmen were to pattern the earthly tabernacle after the heavenly one. So, they had to have sufficient skill and knowledge of all the crafts necessary to complete this task, such as metalworking, woodworking, stone cutting, embroidery, art, and every other craft necessary to build the tabernacle.

A parallel to this type of gifting can be seen in the various spiritual gifts the Holy Spirit provided to the church in the New Testament, as in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4. And just as the gifts are provided by the divine Holy Spirit in the New Testament, they were also provided by God’s divine Spirit in the Old Testament.

The fourth way we see the divinity or deity of God’s Spirit in the Old Testament is in the Spirit’s anointing and empowerment of kings and other leaders among God’s covenant people.

Anointing and empowerment

When the Spirit of God anointed kings, he acted as the suzerain or great emperor of the covenant in order to delegate authority to a vassal or servant king. In the structure of the covenant, God himself ruled over everything. And he appointed lesser kings to rule over portions of his kingdom on his behalf. For instance, Saul and David were kings over God’s servant nation Israel. They ruled on God’s behalf and were completely under his

authority. That's why in 1 Chronicles 29:23, David's throne in Jerusalem is referred to as the throne of the Lord. So, when the Spirit of God anointed kings, he was exercising authority that belonged to God himself. And this indicates that the Spirit was himself God.

Most of the Old Testament references to this kind of anointing and gifting refer to the Spirit as the "Spirit of the Lord," using his covenant name Yahweh. This was probably to emphasize the covenantal nature of these offices, which reported directly to God as their suzerain. An example of this can be found in the transfer of this anointing from Israel's first king Saul to his successor David. As we read in 1 Samuel 16:13-14:

Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed [David] in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power... Now the Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul (1 Samuel 16:13-14).

David received the Holy Spirit when he was anointed as king, even though he hadn't yet ascended Israel's throne. Similarly, Saul lost the Holy Spirit's supernatural blessing and gifting, even though he still ruled as king. Later, after David sinned with Bathsheba, David feared the same thing might happen to him. So, in Psalm 51:11, he begged to keep God's Holy Spirit. He wasn't asking to keep the throne — he expected to be able to keep that, just as Saul had kept it even when he sinned. Instead, David asked to keep God's empowering presence that enabled him to carry out God's royal will.

The New Testament sheds some light on this activity of the Spirit in the account of Jesus' baptism and anointing for his office of Messiah or Christ. This account is recorded in Matthew 3:14-17, Mark 1:9-11, and in Luke 3:21, 22. In all of these accounts, Jesus' baptism prepared him for ministry, the Holy Spirit descended on him bodily in the form of a dove, and the Father spoke from heaven to confirm that he was pleased with Jesus. Without question, the Spirit of God at Jesus' baptism is the third person of the Trinity. And this helps us see that the same Holy Spirit performed the same function in the Old Testament.

Of course, the Old Testament's original audiences wouldn't have interpreted this to mean that the Spirit of the Lord was a distinct person within the Godhead. Nevertheless, they should have been able to see that when the Spirit anointed and gifted people, it meant that God himself was interacting with the world. We see this in the anointing of Saul in 1 Samuel 10:6, and in the gifting of David for his rule as king in Isaiah 11:2. It's also apparent in Micah's gifting for his office of prophet in Micah 3:8. And the Spirit of the Lord appointed and empowered Israel's judges throughout the book of Judges: he came upon Othniel in 3:10; Gideon in 6:34; Jephthah in 11:29; and Samson in 13:25, 14:6, 19, and 15:14.

The Old Testament suggests that the Spirit is God without fully, explicitly naming that. So, when we read in the beginning of the Bible, Genesis 1:2, we have the Spirit of Elohim hovering over the waters or hovering over creation. This seems ambiguous, but when you turn to Psalm 104 the psalmist is going to say that the Spirit is the one that gives life to creation. And then we move on to a passage like Ezekiel

36. And it's a strange passage within God's promise of a new covenant. God says to his people, "I'm going to put my Spirit in you, and I'm going to move you to want to follow and do my decrees." What this is saying is that the Spirit in them is going to create a new kind of person, one that's not bent toward disobedience but one that's bent toward obedience. And so, when we think about, what's the Spirit doing in the Old Testament, the Spirit is the one... One of the basic things he's doing is he's giving life. He's the life-giving principle. He's the one that gives creational life, so to speak, and new creational life; even in the Old Testament we see this. And so, when we ask, "Who gives life?" the only one who gives life, we know this, is God himself. And so, the Old Testament itself even suggests that the Spirit is God the Almighty.

— Dr. Uche Anizor

So far, we've considered how the doctrine of pneumatology developed in the Old Testament by focusing on references to God's Spirit, and on the Spirit's divinity or deity. Now let's briefly mention how these references also point to the Spirit's personhood.

PERSONHOOD

The Old Testament clearly shows that God is personal. But it doesn't indicate how many persons he has, or whether or not his persons are distinct from each other. So, when we say that the Old Testament demonstrates the Spirit's personhood, we don't mean that it points to him as distinct from the Father and the Son. We just mean that it proves him to be a fully divine, uncreated person.

By contrast, it's sometimes argued that, in the Old Testament, God's Spirit was presented as an impersonal force or power. But as we've already seen, many references to the Spirit are direct references to God himself. And God is definitely not an impersonal force. So, every passage that equates God's Spirit with God himself demonstrates that the Spirit is personal. In addition to this, there are also passages that ascribe personal qualities specifically to the Spirit, qualities that could never be used to describe an impersonal force.

When the Old Testament uses language of Spirit, it's in the context usually of God's presence and God's power. Because the references are to a relationship with a God who is personal, it seems like that we should understand those references as referring to the personal presence of the God who is, that although it's possible to read disconnected and to read those texts individualistically and isolated from the overall testimony of the Scriptures, I think if we look at the Old Testament canon as a whole, and we see the Spirit's work related to, connected to the empowerment of God himself, that that leads to

the implication to this is the Spirit of God, that this is a person. As we move then to the New Testament, it becomes clear and explicit that the third person of the Godhead is a person like the Father and the Son.

— Dr. Glenn R. Kreider

The Old Testament points to the personhood of God's Spirit in many ways. But for the sake of time, we'll look at just four ways, starting with how the Old Testament calls attention to the Spirit's emotions.

Emotions

As we know, impersonal forces don't exhibit emotions. Only persons do. In our own lives, we experience grief, anger, joy and many other emotions. And Scripture describes the Holy Spirit in similar ways. For instance, Isaiah wrote that Israel's rebellion against God "grieved" the Holy Spirit. Listen again to what Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 63:10:

They rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit. So he turned and became their enemy and he himself fought against them (Isaiah 63:10).

Similarly, verses like Micah 2:7 raise the possibility that the Lord's Spirit can be angry.

Relationships

Second, we see the Spirit's personhood in passages that speak of him actively engaging in relationships with humanity. For instance, in the story of the flood of Noah's day, Genesis 6:3 speaks of God's Spirit contending or striving with humanity. This contending was personal because it involved evaluating and intelligently responding to humanity's sin. There may even be a suggestion that God's Spirit flooded the world only after his patience had run its course. Impersonal forces don't contend with us, respond intelligently, or demonstrate patience. In order for the Spirit to do these things, he had to be a person.

Authority

Third, the Spirit's personhood is demonstrated by people's response to his authority. As just one example, Exodus 17:1-7 records the people's rebellion at the waters of Meribah. In this account, the people complained to Moses that there was no water for them to drink, and they "put the Lord to the test." Psalm 106:33 recalls this same event saying that the people "rebelled against the Spirit of God." Now, of course, people can rebel against impersonal laws and institutions. But when Psalm 106 says that

the people rebelled against God's Spirit, it means that they rebelled against the Lord who had authority over them, not just against his rules.

Volition

And fourth, the Spirit's personhood is also indicated in places where he's shown to be speaking of his own volition and making choices about what prophets should say on his behalf. For example, in 2 Samuel 23:2, David claimed that the Spirit of the Lord spoke through him. That is, David was giving voice to what *the Spirit* wanted him to say. Similarly, in Ezekiel 11:5, the Spirit of the Lord spoke to the prophet Ezekiel and told him what to tell his people. Again, impersonal forces don't have conversations, let alone ideas they want to express. Only persons do.

As we've said before, passages like these don't reveal the Holy Spirit as a distinct person within the Godhead. But they do demonstrate that God's Spirit is a divine person and not simply a force.

In many places in the Old Testament, God's Spirit is both fully God and fully personal. But these passages don't refer to any of God's persons *specifically*. After all, God's existence in three persons wasn't revealed until the New Testament. But as we'll see, the New Testament often identifies the third person of the Trinity with God's Spirit in the Old Testament. So, as Christians, it's right for us to conclude that these Old Testament references foreshadow the revelation of the Holy Spirit as a full member of the Trinity.

Now that we've considered the Holy Spirit in the Trinity from the perspective of the Old Testament, let's turn to God's further revelation in the New Testament.

NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament commonly refers to the Holy Spirit in ways that echo the Old Testament. For instance, it uses the Greek word *pneuma*, meaning "spirit" in the same way the Old Testament uses *ruach*. Both words have the same range of meaning, referring to wind, breath, the life force of animals, human souls, and non-corporeal spirits. In fact, the Septuagint — the Greek translation of the Old Testament — commonly translates *ruach* as *pneuma*.

Just as in the Old Testament, God's Spirit is known by a variety of names in the New Testament. Many of these employ the word *pneuma*. He's most often called "Holy Spirit." But he's also known as "the Spirit of God," "the Spirit of the Father," "the Spirit of the Lord," "the Spirit of Jesus," "the Spirit of Christ," "the Spirit of Truth," "the Spirit of Holiness," "the Spirit of Life," "the Spirit of Grace," and other similar names. These names identify the Holy Spirit with God's Spirit in the Old Testament, and also describe his character and work. They show him to be one with the Father and Son, and to have attributes like truth, holiness, life, and grace.

With regard to the Spirit's personhood, the New Testament teaches much more clearly and directly that the Holy Spirit is a distinct person within the Trinity. But even in the New Testament, God's people had to grow in their understanding of his person and work. Jesus' teachings in the Gospels give us glimpses into what Jews and Christians understood during his earthly ministry. And the rest of the New Testament teaches us what the apostles ultimately came to understand and to teach.

In line with this history, our discussion of the New Testament will divide into two parts. First, we'll explore what Jesus directly taught about the Holy Spirit. And second, we'll see what the apostles later taught during their ministries. Let's begin with Jesus.

JESUS

During his earthly ministry, Jesus confirmed the Old Testament teachings that the Holy Spirit is God himself, and that the Holy Spirit is a person. But he also revealed something new — namely, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three distinct persons within God. This is one of the reasons the Jews became so upset with Jesus. They were utterly offended by his claim to be God. As John commented in John 5:18:

For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God (John 5:18).

The Jews wrongly assumed that Jesus couldn't be God because the Father in heaven was already God. They rightly understood that there is only one true God. But they wrongly inferred from this that God existed as only one person. This is probably why the Jews didn't become angry when Jesus identified the Holy Spirit as a person. They must have assumed, however wrongly, that Jesus was simply referring to God as the Holy Spirit. We see this in Matthew 12 and Mark 3, where Jesus explained his power of exorcism. In Matthew 12:24, the Pharisees accused him of casting out demons "by Beelzebub, the prince of demons." And Jesus responded in verse 28 that he cast out demons "by the Spirit of God." In the context of Jesus' broader teachings, it's clear that he was referring to the Spirit as a distinct person from the Father. But there's no indication that the Pharisees grasped the significance of his words.

In his private discussions with his followers, Jesus was even more direct. His fullest teachings on the Holy Spirit's distinct personhood can be found in John 14–16. These chapters are part of Jesus' "Farewell Discourse" — his final words to the eleven faithful apostles that were intended to prepare them for his death. In John 14:16-17, Jesus said:

I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever — the Spirit of truth. 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 (John 14:16-17).

The unbelieving Jews — along with the rest of the world — were unaware that the Holy Spirit was a distinct person from the Father. But the apostles had already learned about the Holy Spirit's distinct personhood from Jesus. And Jesus continued to call attention to the Spirit's distinct personhood throughout his Farewell Discourse. In John 14:26, he mentioned:

The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name (John 14:26)

In John 15:26, he spoke of:

The Counselor ... whom I will send to you from the Father ... who goes out from the Father (John 15:26)

In John 16:7, he added:

Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you (John 16:7).

And in John 16:13, Jesus said:

The Spirit ... will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come (John 16:13).

Throughout his Farewell Discourse, Jesus repeatedly taught that the Holy Spirit is a distinct person from both the Father and from himself. The Holy Spirit would be sent by the Father and by his Son Jesus. The Spirit would speak what the Father told him to speak, and he would replace the Son as God's active presence among his people. So, the Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son. He's his own, distinct person.

Now, I think many of us when we hear the word "Holy Spirit" we might be tempted to think of the wind, and sometimes we might be tempted to think it's an "it," but when you look at John 14–16, you find something unique about the person of the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus Christ referred to him as a "he," meaning it's not an "it" but rather is personal... But not only is he just a person, his origin — the fact that he comes *from* heaven — clearly is a sign that he is actually also divine in nature. And there's also another word that Jesus uses, which is "*another*" Counselor, someone who is distinct from him but yet will continue what he has done. And he is also referred to as the Spirit of truth — some of the characteristics that only Jesus Christ has. He just told us he's the way, the truth and the life... So, the Holy Spirit is distinct in person, but he has the same substance as the Lord Jesus Christ in terms of, he's the Spirit of truth as well, just like the Lord Jesus Christ *is* the truth.

— Rev. Vuyani Sindo

In Matthew 28:19, in the Great Commission, Jesus also called attention to the distinct personhood of the Spirit when he said:

Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).

In both English and Greek, the word translated “name” here is singular, and the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all listed as equals.

This section of the Great Commission is commonly called a “Trinitarian formula” because it lists the names of all three persons of the Trinity in a way that points to their joint membership in the Godhead. When Jesus said that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit all shared a single name, he indicated that they all shared God’s own authority — meaning they must all be God. He also indicated that all three persons of God would rule over the disciplined nations.

Having looked at Jesus’ teachings in the New Testament, let’s look at what the apostles said about the Holy Spirit.

APOSTLES

First, we should emphasize that the apostles believed everything that the Old Testament and Jesus taught about the Holy Spirit. They understood him to be fully divine, and to be a distinct person from the Father and from the Son. As just one example, listen to Peter’s words in Acts 5:3-4. After Ananias and his wife Sapphira lied about a monetary gift to the early church, Peter said to them:

Ananias, how is that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit? ... You have not lied to men but to God (Acts 5:3-4).

Peter said that lying to the Holy Spirit was lying to God, proving that the Holy Spirit is God himself. Moreover, the very fact that Ananias was able to lie to the Holy Spirit proves that the Holy Spirit is a person. And in 2 Corinthians 13:14, Paul affirmed the Holy Spirit’s divinity and distinct personhood when he ended his letter this way:

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all (2 Corinthians 13:14).

Paul expressed a Trinitarian understanding of God by mentioning all three persons on an equal footing, both in terms of the honor and the attributes he ascribed to them. Similarly, in 1 Peter 1:1-2, Peter described believers as:

God's elect ... who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood (1 Peter 1:1-2).

These Trinitarian formulas resemble the one that Jesus used in the Great Commission. They testify to the fact that the Father, the Spirit, and the Son Jesus Christ are all equally God, sharing the same power and glory, and that they're all distinct persons.

And the apostles affirmed the Spirit's full divinity and personhood in many other ways, too. They ascribed personal qualities to him, like thought and emotions. For instance, in Acts 15:28, the Holy Spirit determined how the Old Testament law applied to Gentiles. Romans 5:5 speaks of his love. And Ephesians 4:30 mentions his grief. The apostles also spoke of him performing intentional actions, like interceding for the church in Romans 8:26, 27, and distributing gifts according to his own will in 1 Corinthians 12:11. And they ascribed incommunicable divine attributes to him — attributes that only God can possess. For instance, Paul described his omniscience in Ephesians 1:17, and 1 Corinthians 2:10, 11, where he said that the Spirit knows everything that God knows. And Hebrews 9:14 calls the Holy Spirit the “eternal Spirit,” indicating that he existed even before creation, and that his continued existence is everlasting and unbreakable.

But one of the most frequent ways the apostles testified to the Holy Spirit as a member of the Trinity was by attributing the inspiration and authorship of the Old Testament Scriptures to him. In Acts 1:16, Peter referred to:

The Scripture ... which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David (Acts 1:16)

In Acts 28:25, Paul said:

The Holy Spirit spoke the truth ... through Isaiah the prophet (Acts 28:25).

And in 2 Peter 1:20-21, Peter provided Scripture's fullest summary of the Spirit's work in authoring Scripture, saying:

No prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21).

The personhood and deity of the Holy Spirit through the inspiration of Scripture is, I think, fascinating. Here we're talking about God's word, and yet it is often through the Spirit that God's word is given to us; repeatedly, we hear “the word of the Lord” or “the Spirit said” or “David said” or “Moses said,” and these are kind of aligned all together... This is one of the primary functions of the Spirit. The

word of God is the word of the Spirit, and the word of the Spirit is the word of God.

— Dr. J. Scott Horrell

Beyond this, the apostles' understanding of the full divinity and personhood of the Holy Spirit was affirmed when the Spirit was finally poured out on the church, just as Jesus had promised. Acts 2 records that on the first Pentecost after Jesus ascended into heaven, the entire church received the gift of the Holy Spirit in a spectacular way. What appeared to be tongues of fire descended on them, and they spoke the gospel in every language. And from this point forward, the apostles were gifted in ways that demonstrated God's power over all creation. They were enabled to heal the sick, raise the dead, and perform many other miracles that testified to the truth of the Holy Spirit's divine power and favor.

It's clear that the apostles saw the Holy Spirit as a distinct person within the Trinity. They recognized that this truth was hinted at in the Old Testament. And they understood that Jesus had revealed it, too. But they also had experienced the reality of the Spirit's powerful presence, as he moved history forward into a new stage of God's saving work. The Holy Spirit was poured out on them in power, so that they worked miracles, received revelations from God, and were even inspired to write the Scriptures of the New Testament.

So far in our lesson on the Holy Spirit in the Trinity, we've explored the historical development of pneumatology by focusing on the Old Testament and on the New Testament. Now we're ready to address our last major topic: the development of formalized pneumatology in church history.

CHURCH HISTORY

For the first few centuries, the early church worked to explain and summarize Scripture's teaching on the Holy Spirit. Scripture has always taught that there is only one God, and that the Father, Son and Spirit all are that one God. But this is obviously a complex and mysterious idea. So, Christians have often disagreed over how to explain and define it.

We'll look at four steps in the development of pneumatology in early church history. First, we'll consider the affirmation of the Holy Spirit in the Apostles' Creed. Second, we'll explore the formalized Trinitarian doctrine. Third, we'll see how this doctrine was reflected in the Nicene Creed. And fourth, we'll mention the distinction between the ontology and economy of the Trinity. Let's begin with the Apostles' Creed.

APOSTLES' CREED

The Apostles' Creed grew out of local baptismal creeds that date as far back as A.D. 200. These were creeds that new believers were expected to affirm when they were baptized. Some ancient accounts indicate that when a person was baptized, he or she was expected to provide three affirmations: one relating to the Father, one to the Son, and one to the Holy Spirit. And the Apostles' Creed is structured around these affirmations. As such, it liturgically places the Holy Spirit on the same level as the Father and the Son. And it does this because it reflects the early church's belief that the Holy Spirit is a third distinct person within the uncreated Godhead, on an equal level with the Father and the Son.

Moreover, within the structure of the Apostles' Creed, the various works of each person of the Trinity are listed under his name. So, the Father is said to be the Maker of heaven and earth. Regarding the Son, the Creed lists his conception, birth, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and future return. And the Holy Spirit is mentioned as the one responsible for the church and for the application of salvation to believers.

The Apostles' Creed points to the Holy Spirit as a full member of the Trinity. The shape of the Apostles' Creed is undeniably Trinitarian: "[We] believe in God the Father ... creator of heaven and earth. [We] believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit ... [and we] believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints ..." and so on. And so, the Trinitarian shape there is very clear, and it says a little bit about the primary role which each of three of the persons play, so the Father: creator of heaven and earth; the Son who was born of the virgin Mary and grew and died as the sacrifice of sin on the cross; and the Holy Spirit whose role is actually manifest primarily now in the church, the communion of saints, forgiveness of sins and the work in the body of Christ today.

— Dr. Simon Vibert

Despite the fact that the Apostles' Creed pointed to both the Spirit's full divinity or deity, and his full personhood, it still didn't provide a clear definition of the doctrine of the Trinity. It contained all the right elements. But it didn't produce the vocabulary that the church eventually came to embrace. As a result, people could say they affirmed the language of the Creed even if they didn't agree that the Spirit was a third distinct person on an equal level with the Father and Son.

Having mentioned how the Apostles' Creed reflected the development of pneumatology in church history, let's consider the initial stages of formalized Trinitarian doctrine.

TRINITARIAN DOCTRINE

God's existence as the Trinity is highly mysterious. It's so far beyond our experience that we have a hard time thinking about it, let alone talking about it. So, in order for the early church to discuss their beliefs about God, it was useful for them to find consistent ways to talk about him. And much of the early church's work in this area benefited from the work of the early theologian Tertullian.

Tertullian was a prolific Christian writer who lived from around A.D. 155–230. He used and popularized the Latin term *trinitas* as a way to refer to the Bible's teachings that God exists as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. *Trinitas* can be translated "three" or "triad." But when it refers to the Godhead, we translate it "Trinity."

Tertullian also used the Latin word *persona* — which we translate "person" — to refer to the distinct persons of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And he used the Latin *substantia* — meaning "substance" or "essence" — to refer to God's being, which the Father, Son and Holy Spirit share in common. This is why the traditional definition of Trinity says:

God has three persons, but only one essence.

Of course, the church didn't reach this understanding of the Trinity without difficulty. And in the conversations that led up to this definition, the Holy Spirit was often at the center of debate. There were some, like the fourth-century theologian Eustathius of Sebaste, who wrongly believed that the Holy Spirit was neither the self-existent God nor a created being. And even the creeds of the church didn't provide many details that all Christians were expected to affirm. For example, the Apostles' Creed merely said, "I believe in the Holy Spirit." And the original Nicene Creed, written in A.D. 325 by the First Council of Nicea, simply said, "We believe ... in the Holy Spirit."

As a result of this lack of clarity, there were many arguments over the details of Trinitarian doctrine. In fact, it got so bad that during the reign of the Roman emperor Constantius II, and for a short while after his death, many in the church actually rejected Trinitarianism, at least in the form we know it today. The Second Council of Sirmium in A.D. 351 and the Third Council of Sirmium in A.D. 357 affirmed what's been called the "Arian heresy." This teaching denied the Son's full membership in the Godhead and denied that the Son was of the same essence or substance as the Father. At this point in history, many parts of the church broadly rejected the same Trinitarian doctrine they had previously accepted as biblical.

Now that we've considered pneumatology in church history from the Apostles' Creed to the initial formalization of Trinitarian doctrine, let's turn our attention to the Nicene Creed.

NICENE CREED

As we've mentioned, the original Nicene Creed, written in A.D. 325, said very little about the Holy Spirit. But in light of the controversies that arose, another council

was held to debate and resolve the questions about the Trinity. In A.D. 381, the First Council of Constantinople met. They rejected the Arian heresies, and defended the Nicene understanding of the Trinity. They also revised and expanded the Nicene Creed so that it could no longer be affirmed by Arians and others that denied God's eternal existence as three distinct, uncreated persons in one essence. With regard to the Holy Spirit, the Nicene Creed was expanded to say:

We believe ... in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets.

This version of the Creed is sometimes called the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, in order to distinguish it from the original Nicene Creed.

It's likely that this expanded emphasis on the Holy Spirit was motivated, at least in part, by the work of Basil of Caesarea, who lived from around A.D. 330–379. Basil's book titled *De Spiritu Sancto*, or *On the Holy Spirit*, was greatly influential in refuting the beliefs of people like Eustathius, who refused to acknowledge the full deity of the Holy Spirit. Basil also made the point that since the Holy Spirit was God, he deserved to be worshiped. The expanded references to the Spirit in the Nicene Creed themselves constituted a form of worship, since the Creed became part of the church's liturgy. But they also helped lead the church more broadly to focus on the worship of the Spirit in the rest of their liturgy and prayers.

There was an interesting dispute over worship of the Holy Spirit in the fourth century. In his book, *On the Holy Spirit*, Basil of Caesarea tells us that there were two liturgies that were used in his church. The first liturgy was praise to the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit. A second liturgy was praise to the Father, with the Son, together with the Spirit. Some who were Arian in orientation objected to this liturgy because they really didn't believe the Holy Spirit was divine. But if, as Scripture teaches, we have good reason to believe that the Holy Spirit is divine, then it's appropriate that we express to him in worship, doxology, and praise his true nature.

— Dr. Keith Johnson

So far, we've considered the development of pneumatology in early church history in terms of the Apostles' Creed, formalized Trinitarian doctrine, and the Nicene Creed. Now let's address the distinction between the ontology and economy of the Trinity.

ONTOLOGY AND ECONOMY

As church history progressed, theologians eventually came to understand the Trinity from two different perspectives. They began to speak of both the ontological Trinity and the economic Trinity.

The word “ontological” refers to being and existence. So, the theological term “ontological Trinity” has to do with the existence of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit within the Trinity. From this perspective, the Holy Spirit is equal in power and glory to the Father and the Son. And he shares with them all of God’s divine attributes. As the Westminster Shorter Catechism question and answer 4 puts it, all three persons are “infinite, eternal and unchangeable in [their] being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.”

You’ll recall that the Niceno-Constantinopolitan version of the Nicene Creed says:

We believe ... in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father.

The western church later expanded the Latin version of this Creed to add the word *filioque*, meaning “and the Son,” to the end of this phrase. So, most churches in the West now use a version that says the Holy Spirit “proceeds from the Father *and the Son*.”

Some theologians have understood the Holy Spirit’s procession to be ontological. That is, they believe the Spirit’s personhood is eternally “breathed out” from the Father, or from the Father and the Son. But others have understood the Spirit’s procession as a function of the economic Trinity.

The theological term “economic Trinity” refers to how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit interact with each other, especially as it pertains to creation. From this perspective, each one has different roles and different responsibilities, and even different authority.

Many parts of Scripture suggest that the Holy Spirit willingly serves the Father and Son. For instance, he was sent or “given” by the Father and the Son. Scripture teaches this in passages like Luke 11:13, John 14:26 and 15:26, and Acts 2:33. And when he comes, the Spirit obeys the Father and the Son by doing the work they’ve sent him to do. We learn of this in places like John 16:13, Romans 8:11, and 1 Peter 1:2.

Because of passages like these, many theologians say that, within the economic Trinity, the Father and Son have greater authority than the Holy Spirit. Even so, it’s important to emphasize that the Spirit is still fully God, and that this authority structure exists because they all want and agree to it. So, the Holy Spirit isn’t in any way inferior to the Father and the Son.

It’s important to recognize the difference between the ontological Trinity and the economic Trinity. This is a very useful distinction that the theologians have made, and it helps us avoid a lot of confusion when we study the doctrine of the Trinity. When we speak of the ontological Trinity, we’re referring to its nature. We refer to the fact that the three persons of the Trinity — Father, Son and Holy Spirit —

are equal in substance, power, and glory. Of course, none of them are superior in this regard. The Father is God. The Son is God. The Holy Spirit is God. We could say it like this: the Father is one hundred percent God; the Son is one hundred percent God; the Holy Spirit is one hundred percent God. But when it comes to their roles, the division of roles, then we are talking about the economic Trinity. We mean with this that the Bible teaches us that despite the three being equal, as we've said, in substance, power and glory, when it comes to their various jobs or roles, we see in Scripture that the Father is the one who has the role ... in salvation, as the one who chooses to save. The Son is the one who performs the work of redemption by dying for us, and the Holy Spirit is he who applies the work of redemption. When we talk about the economic Trinity, we see there is also the subordination of the Son to the Father, and of the Holy Spirit to the Son and to the Father. That does not mean that the Son is less than the Father in the ontological sense, or the Holy Spirit is lower in that sense, but by mutual agreement, we could say that they willingly submit to the authority of the Father.

— Dr. David Correa, translation

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit took centuries to formalize. But this doesn't mean that the church didn't always believe the central elements of pneumatology. After all, the church in all ages has embraced the Scriptures. And the Scriptures clearly teach that the Holy Spirit is a fully divine person — an equal member of the Godhead. Rather, the formalization of pneumatology happened in stages, and generally in response to heresy. Theologians realized that they needed to provide more details, and to communicate more clearly, in order to prevent others from falling into error. And these formulations have stood the test of time. Throughout the centuries, nearly all branches of the church have affirmed the same beliefs about the Holy Spirit's role in the Trinity.

CONCLUSION

In this lesson on the Holy Spirit in the Trinity, we've explored how the Old Testament speaks of God's Spirit in terms of his divinity and personhood. We've seen how this understanding was expanded in the New Testament under Jesus and his apostles. And we've surveyed pneumatology in church history by considering the Apostles' Creed, the formalization of Trinitarian doctrine, the Nicene Creed, and the distinction between Trinitarian ontology and economy.

Understanding who the Holy Spirit is in the Trinity is an important part of understanding his work in our lives. As we'll see in future lessons, the Holy Spirit is even more personally involved with us than the Father and the Son are. He indwells us. We rely on him for spiritual strength, for experiencing God's forgiveness when we sin, for

growth in holiness, for perseverance in faith, for the gifts that allow us to minister to others, and for a host of other blessings. And knowing that the One who lives in us is the personal, fully divine Spirit of our Father, and of our Lord and Savior, helps us appreciate his ministry and cooperate with the work he's doing in our lives.

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We Believe in the Holy Spirit

LESSON
ONE

In the Trinity
Faculty Forum



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We Believe in the Holy Spirit

Lesson One: In the Trinity

Faculty Forum

With

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Dr. Gregg R. Allison
Dr. Uche Anizor
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Dr. Glen G. Scorgie

Question 1:

How does the New Testament's revelation of the Holy Spirit help us recognize Old Testament clues about the Trinity?

Dr. J. Scott Horrell

Really, in the Old Testament you have this, many times, this sense of God distinct from God. You have the *dabar*, the Word of God that goes forth and creates. You have the angel of the Lord who speaks as God sometimes, and other times — it's not clear at all — but frequently distinct from God. You have the Spirit of God who goes forth... But all of these are subtle kinds of influences that, when we go to the New Testament and we have the full revelation of Jesus Christ, begin to inform how then we read the Old Testament. Luke 24, I think, is remarkable. Jesus is talking with the two disciples on the way to Emmaus and he opens up the Scriptures, their hearts burn within them as he explains to them what is taught of him, said of him in the Law and the Prophets and the Psalms... Now we see more clearly than ever, if that's true of the Son, it's also true of the Holy Spirit — not as clearly because the New Testament is especially unfolding who is our Savior as now the eternal Son of God — but that's also true of the Holy Spirit as we see more and more a distinction of the Spirit in the New Testament. So, we have a canonical lens to understand not only the Father now, and the Son, but also the Holy Spirit. So, I take it that the Trinity — because it's the same God of the Old Testament as in the New Testament — is in fact the bedrock of all the Bible. And the Old Testament's under sand, under dirt a lot of times, and occasionally will come to the surface, but it is the New Testament that sheds light on the Old Testament as to how we might understand phrases like, "Let *us* create man in our own image." Now, was Moses thinking Trinity when he wrote passages like that? Almost certainly not. But at the same time, the Holy Spirit is the coauthor of Scripture, and so these subtleties in the Old Testament that speak of this ambiguous plurality in the one God are unfolded marvelously as we come into the New Testament; and so, the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Prof. Mumo Kisau

In the Bible, we read in Genesis 1 that, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth”... And then quickly we find in verse 2, “The earth was void and formless ... and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the deep.” So, we’re introduced to God, if you will — I could say, if I’m allowed to say — God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. And in verse 3, God said, God spoke, and this is God the Word... We come to John 1 and we read in John 1, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... everything was made through him and without him nothing was made that which was made.” So, here we’re introduced to the Word again... And then we go quickly to chapters 14, 15 and 16, and Jesus himself then begins to talk about God the Holy Spirit. And he then begins to talk about “I and the Father are one.” So, we’re introduced to the Father, we’re introduced to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. In Matthew 28 ... it says that “then go ye to the whole world and there baptize...” You make all the world my disciples, “baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.” And therefore, you can see the combination, and all of the Old Testament is colored with the Holy Spirit... And, this you find in Isaiah, he’s talking about the Son; the Son is born. Who is this Son? It’s the Word that becomes flesh, and therefore, both the Old Testament and New Testament they have the unity of talking about the Trinity, talking about God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Dr. Danny Akin

You know, when you come to the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit is mentioned, but not a lot. There are particular places where his ministry is emphasized, especially in the book of Genesis, but it’s not like what you have in the New Testament... We need to acknowledge that the understanding of the triune God takes place through what we call “progressive revelation,” where God, throughout the canon of Scripture and moving into the New Testament, is progressively revealing more and more about who he is and how he functions, so that when you see, for example, the phrase in the Old Testament, “the Spirit of God,” there’s no reason to try to make some type of radical disconnect between, say, God the Father. When you speak of the Spirit of God you’re speaking of God. Now, yes, you’re speaking of the third person of the triune God that we come to know more *fully* in light of New Testament revelation, but you’re still talking just as much about God when you speak of him as the Spirit of God in the Old Testament as you are if you’re talking about the Father, or the Son, or as it is more fully revealed in the New Testament in triune passages like Matthew 28, the Great Commission text, or take Ephesians 4 in the first 6 verses. There are a number of places — the end of 2 Corinthians 13 — where you have all three brought together in a very clear “package.” That’s maybe not the best word, but it’ll work. But in the Old Testament it’s revealed in a different kind of a way.

Question 2:

How can we demonstrate the divinity of the Holy Spirit from Scripture?

Rev. Dr. Emad A. Mikhail (translation)

Actually, there's more than one way to demonstrate that the Holy Spirit is God, or as theologians say, to demonstrate the divinity of the Holy Spirit. First of all, we see the divinity of the Holy Spirit in creation, his role in creation. In Genesis 1:1-2:

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, ESV).

There are two things here: First, the Scripture does not tell us that God created the Holy Spirit. He is not created. He is the Creator. He is God. This is the first thing. The second thing is that the Spirit of God participated in the process of creation — not just that he is not created, but also he participated in the process of creation because he is God, and therefore, he is the Creator. In the expression “And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters,” we see here the image of a bird who hovers over the nest of his chicks. It's like he's embracing his nest and giving life. So, the image here is that the Spirit of God is the one who gives life to the world. He is the Creator, and therefore, we see here the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Also, there's a second way that shows us his divinity: his role in revelation... He reveals himself through the Son and also through the Holy Spirit. I'd like to read from 1 Corinthians 2:9, 10, and 11:

But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him” — these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:9-11, ESV).

The words here are clear. In order for the Holy Spirit to reveal God, he has to be equal to God; he has to know God's thoughts. It's impossible for an angel or any creature to reveal the Creator because he cannot search the depths of God. But, as the spirit of man knows all of man's depths, the Spirit of God knows everything in God's depths, and this demonstrates to us the divinity of the Holy Spirit... Also, we can demonstrate the divinity of the Holy Spirit through his role in the general resurrection. He is going to have a role in the resurrection of our bodies. And this is what we read about in Romans 8:11:

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, ESV).

So, God the Father will raise our bodies in the resurrection day through his Spirit who dwells in us. If the Spirit of God is not God, how will he be able to raise the dead?

Dr. J. Scott Horrell

Typically in the Old Testament, the Hebrew term “*ruach*,” for “spirit,” can be used in a lot of different ways, but when related to God it’s usually the Spirit, the finger of God, the power of God active in a particular place... But as we walk through the Scriptures, sometimes, like in Isaiah 40, you have this creation going on and then, “Who has advised the Spirit of God — the Spirit of the Lord?” It’s as though the Spirit of the Lord and God are one in the same. Other times we see the Spirit can be grieved, as God gives the Spirit to Israel and Isaiah 63:10, there you have the Holy Spirit grieving over Israel which has turned against Yahweh, the Lord... We come into the New Testament and there’s more evidence, of course, of the blessed Spirit’s deity. Certainly, one of those would be as we see the Great Commission: “Go, making disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name” — the sacred name, singular — “of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit”... But I would say, overall, the deity of the Holy Spirit comes to us through the indirect evidence. He shares the titles of God, some forty titles for the Holy Spirit: he’s the Spirit of Yahweh, the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of the Son, the Spirit of Christ, as well as the Holy Spirit. So, you’ve got the titles, you’ve got the attributes, you’ve got the works of the Holy Spirit. And so, many of these coalesce — I think Calvin said all of these attributes ascribed to God are ascribed to the Spirit, so the Spirit must be God.

Dr. Glenn R. Kreider

The New Testament doesn’t spend a great deal of time explicitly addressing the question of the divinity of the Holy Spirit, unlike the divinity, the deity, of the Son where there’s a great deal of attention to that he is the Creator, that he is sent from the Father, etc. The Holy Spirit doesn’t get that same kind of attention. But I think there is a compelling case to be made from the way the three persons of the Godhead are mentioned, the way they appear together in the baptism of Jesus, in the presentation at the temple, those kind of events. But primarily, it’s because of the way Jesus talks about the Spirit that in the Upper Room Discourse he says, “I will ask the Father; he will send another Comforter who will be” — who you already know because he is like me — “he will be with you. He will be in you.” But the central, the pivotal text is in Acts 5 where, in the story of Ananias and Sapphira, when they lied to the apostles and claimed that they had received a certain sum of money for their house, for their property, and they had received much more than that. When Peter rebukes them Peter says, “You have lied to the Holy Spirit.” And then a little bit later in the same discourse, “You have not lied to man; you have lied to God.” So, to lie to the Holy Spirit is to lie to God.

Question 3:

How do the attributes of the Holy Spirit demonstrate his divinity?

Pastor Pierre Bitar (translation)

I think we can demonstrate the divinity of the Holy Spirit through His attributes... It is written that he is omnipotent. It is written that, "When you send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground." It is written that he is omnipresent. David said, "Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, 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." So, he is omnipresent and also omniscient. It is written in Corinthians, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him." Then he says, "These things God has revealed to us through the Spirit," the Holy Spirit. So, the Holy Spirit takes that which is of God, that which is in God's heart, and gives it and declares it to us.

Dr. Danny Akin

The Holy Spirit is God based upon the clear testimony and witness of Scripture, but specifically we know this to be so because he is given the names of God; he is given the attributes of God, or the attributes of God are ascribed to him. I can take you to passages where the Holy Spirit is referred to as being omnipotent, being omniscient, and in particular being omnipresent... No human is ever described as being omnipotent. We're strong but we're not completely strong. We have presence, but it's located, it's very specific. We have knowledge, but it's a joke to think we have anything close to being omniscient. But the Spirit is said to be all powerful, all knowing, everywhere present. He is also ascribed as being unchanging. He is also ascribed as being eternal. In fact, he is the *eternal* Spirit. Well, just that one attribute alone would give clear indication that when we talk about the Spirit, we're talking about God who has always been, is today, and will always be.

Pastor Rasmy Abraham (translation)

The Holy Spirit has the same attributes as God. The first attribute is that he is eternal; he has always existed... In Hebrews 9:14 it says: "Christ ... through the *eternal Spirit* offered himself without blemish to God." And then, in John 14:16, he is everlasting: "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you *forever*." He is omnipresent in Psalm 139:7: "Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?" He knows the future in John 16:13: "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth ... and he will declare to you the things that are to come." Then he is the life giver. It says in John 6:63: "It is the Spirit who gives life." He is omniscient in 1 Corinthians 2:10: "[T]hese things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God." Then he is holy. And the attribute of holiness and the word "holy" cannot refer to anyone but God in Luke 1:35: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you." And similarly, in Ephesians 1:13: "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.”

Question 4:

How do the works of the Holy Spirit demonstrate his divinity?

Dr. Uche Anizor

The works of the Holy Spirit are probably the primary way we understand who the Holy Spirit is. So, one of the main arguments back in the early church regarding the Spirit's deity was that the Spirit does the very things that only God does, and if that's the case — that the Spirit does what only God does — then we have to surmise that the Spirit *is* God. So, for instance, when we read in the New Testament that, in Romans 8, it speaks about, “the Spirit of him ... who raised Christ from the dead” is living in us, and the same Spirit will “give life to [our] mortal bodies.” And so, what we get there is that the Spirit is the agent of resurrection life, of new life. And who is the one who brings new life, who brings life at all? It's God himself. And so, this is Paul *implicitly* saying that the Spirit is God the Almighty himself, the life giver. And we also read throughout the New Testament ... that the Spirit is the one who sanctifies. And when you read the Old Testament, and you ask yourself the question, “Who is it that makes God's people holy?” And the answer is straightforward: It's God himself who makes his people holy. And so, when sanctification is tied to the Spirit, explicitly in the New Testament, what the New Testament is saying is that the Spirit is Yahweh himself, is God, the same God you encounter in the Old Testament.

Yohanes Praptowarso, Ph.D. (translation)

The Holy Spirit's work shows his divinity, or his lordship, starting with ... Genesis 1:2, where the Holy Spirit joined in the work of creating the universe, and [later] in restoring the world — repairing it as well as creating it. And this is evidence that the Holy Spirit is God because he joined in God's work of creation, as well as in the creation of mankind in Genesis 2:7 and following... The Holy Spirit also inspired, from among the believers, people to become witnesses — Acts 1:8 — so that every person can witness the Lord's gospel and can come to believe and be born anew — John 3:3-5. The Holy Spirit enables a person, moves one's heart to become certain that Jesus is Lord and Savior, and this becomes part of the evidence of the Holy Spirit's divinity.

Dr. Mike Fabarez

The works of the Spirit from beginning to end in the Bible clearly reflect his divinity, that he is indeed God and equal with God, coequal with God. We see that from the very beginning in that he is an agent of creation. Much like Christ is described as an agent of creation, the Spirit is described that way in the second verse of the Bible, clarified in the book of Job, that he is actually the one giving life to people. Well, there's only one Creator. That Creator exists in three persons, and all three persons of the Godhead are described as having a hand in that creation. There's mystery in that,

but there's clearly divinity in that. Being the one who is the one who is described as overseeing the writing of Scripture, as 2 Peter 1:21 says, he was the one who moved these authors along to write this book that is described as perfect, with not one jot or tittle ever being removed from the text till it's all fulfilled. Only God can do that. In Isaiah it speaks of the God who can see the end from beginning and that it's recorded and revealed to his prophets. Well, the Spirit of God is the agent of that, and clearly this is an act of divinity. There are many things throughout the Scripture that describe it, but certainly creation and the oversight and production of the Scripture are two very clear ways that we see the divinity of the Spirit.

Question 5:

What kinds of things did the Spirit of the Lord do in the Old Testament that demonstrated his divinity?

Dr. Gregg R. Allison

What did the Holy Spirit do, before Christ, in Old Testament times that would indicate that he is God? We begin with Genesis 1:2 in which we find the Spirit of the Lord hovering over the face of the deep. So, as God creates the heavens and the earth and the earth is formless and void, a watery situation, the Spirit is hovering like a dove. The idea here, I think, is protecting and preparing this watery substance for God's future work, constructing a world which would be hospitable for you and me, and so the Spirit is engaged in creation, which is obviously a divine work. Secondly, we see the Spirit work in specific leaders in the people of God, in the people of Israel. The Spirit would stir up judges, would come upon kings, would speak through prophets, indicating that he is God who is going to liberate his people through judges, who will rule his people through kings, who will speak to his people through prophets. These are all divine activities, and the Spirit is engaged in them. Thirdly, we see the Holy Spirit in prophetic literature pointing out that he will be the one who anoints Messiah, who will become, not only a Savior to the people of Israel, but to the Gentile nations as well. So, the Spirit connected with the Messiah, the Spirit is going to accompany the Messiah in terms of his work of salvation. Salvation is also a divine work. So, we see the Spirit as Creator, as the one who comes upon and leads and empowers judges and kings and prophets, and the one who will be associated with the Messiah, who will bring salvation to the world.

Rev. Dr. Emad A. Mikhail (translation)

The Holy Spirit existed and was active in the Old Testament... The Holy Spirit gave gifts to his servants in the Old Testament in a similar way to the gifts he gave in the New Testament. For example, to the people who established the tabernacle, he gave them wisdom to know how to establish it. This tabernacle resembles the presence of our Lord on earth. So, he has infinite wisdom and can give wisdom to his servants. We see also, in the book of Judges, how he gave power to the judges, and also to the kings, to accomplish their roles to shepherd and protect the people. We also see some other activities of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament. In Isaiah 63, we read about

the role of the Holy Spirit. Here, the prophet is referring to the exodus and says in verse 10:

But they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit (Isaiah 63:10, ESV).

So, they grieved his Holy Spirit. We read the same words in the epistle to the Ephesians 4:

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God (Ephesians 4:30, ESV).

This emphasizes that the Holy Spirit is a person, and affirms that he is the person of God who grieves when his people rebel against him. In the same context, again in Isaiah 63, it says:

He ... put in the midst of them his Holy Spirit (Isaiah 63:11, ESV).

God put in the midst of the people his Holy Spirit. This Spirit resembles the presence of God. He is not an angel, but God himself dwells in the midst of his people. This reminds us of the dwelling of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament; it has its parallel in the Old Testament. So, the dwelling of the Holy Spirit in the midst of the people proves that this is God.

Question 6:

How does Scripture teach us that God's Spirit is a person rather than an impersonal force?

Dr. Ramesh Richard

We know the Spirit of God is definitely seen as a person by his character, his works, his attributes, and by the use of pronouns in the New Testament. And then, reading backward into the Old Testament, which sets the context for the Spirit of God, there is no question that God as a person, as he represents himself, has to be a person in relationship to the human race... God is not simply an idea, is not a principle, is just not a thought or a concept. Then of course is the whole expectation that there needs to be a personal relationship with God from the very first commandment. It says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength." It cannot be a referent to a "thing" that you love with all your heart, mind, soul and strength, that when you love God for who he is, you just love him like a person. How do you love a person? You love him with words. You love him with deeds. You love him with gifts. And so, when we speak about the Spirit of God, if it is just an impersonal force, you can't love an impersonal force. You may obey it. You may submit to it. You may salute it, but you can't love an impersonal force. You love a person. So, one of the ways to read it is through the theology of both the Old Testament, reading back from the New Testament, where it's clearly a person. And then, of course, there are intimations of the Spirit of God doing personal things. For example, in the Major

Prophets, when he says, “The Spirit of God is upon me,” it’s again not just an impersonal force which is anointing him and leading him, but all the personal endowments of a personal Spirit whom God has given to the prophet.

Dr. Craig S. Keener

Not every passage that talks about the Spirit of God identifies the Spirit as a distinct person. But you do have explicitly Trinitarian passages, for instance, Matthew 28, baptizing “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” And then you have other passages, like in 2 Corinthians 13 and so on, that mention the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Also, in John 14–16, we read about the Spirit doing things that only a person would do. For example, Jesus says that he will send another advocate like himself — the Holy Spirit — and the Spirit goes on to prosecute the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment, just like Jesus did, the Spirit is a witness just like we are witnesses, and so on. So, the Spirit is identified as a distinct person in a number of passages.

Rev. Mike Osborne

The Bible over and over again refers to the Holy Spirit in personal terms. Like, to be a person doesn’t mean you have a body; it means you have personal qualities, attributes and so on. For example, the Bible speaks so clearly that the Holy Spirit searches hearts. The Holy Spirit imparts gifts. The Holy Spirit teaches. I mean, read through the Gospel of John, and over and over again Jesus is telling us what the Holy Spirit does... He’s teaching. He’s revealing all truth. He’s guiding. He’s comforting. He’s leading. You know, all of those things are things that persons do. Furthermore, later in the New Testament the apostles teach us that the Holy Spirit has emotions. He is grieved, Paul says in Ephesians. In 1 Thessalonians he says, don’t quench the Holy Spirit’s fire, or don’t put out the fire. So, all of these are things that only persons can do. The Holy Spirit is not a force. He is not an “it.” He is a “he.”

Question 7:

How do Jesus’ words in the Farewell Discourse in John 14–16 point to the deity and distinct personhood of the Holy Spirit?

Dr. Mike Fabarez

In Christ’s Farewell Discourse, or the Upper Room Discourse, there in John 14–16, Jesus says so many things about the Spirit that clarify exactly who we’re speaking of. The personhood of the Spirit is so clear, starting in chapter 14 where he speaks to the Father about sending another. And when there’s so much confusion about the personhood of the Spirit, here’s a clear text that shows us that God is not modalistic, that he’s not just wearing different hats at different times. Jesus is speaking to the second party, the Father — a different person — who then is being asked to send a third person, the person of the Spirit. So, that’s a great distinction that allows us to know that when we’re talking about the Holy Spirit we’re talking about an independent person, although of course, in the doctrine of the Trinity they are

ontologically *one* God. Later in chapter 16 there are so many verbs that are appended to the Spirit that are helpful: the idea that the Spirit is going to *declare*. He's going to *convict*. He's going to *hear*. He's going to *speak*. When you look at all these verbs connected to the description of the Spirit, we see we're not talking of an impersonal force. We're not talking of something other than an actual *bona fide* person with an intellect, emotion and will.

Dr. Joseph D. Fantin

The deity and distinct personhood of the Holy Spirit is one of the more difficult things, I think, to get out of the New Testament. It's clearly there but not nearly as developed as we might like it... John 14, though, does have some important information to contribute to this whole idea. In 14:16, Jesus talks about how he's going to leave, and he's going to send somebody else to help the disciples. Now, you don't want to send somebody who's not sufficient, so it's somebody who's going to be replacing Jesus, in a sense, and his presence has to be seen in somewhat of a similar manner to Jesus himself. So, to me, I think that's one strong evidence that you already have at this point in Jesus' lifetime, and in Johannine writing, this idea that the Holy Spirit is distinct and, like I say, he's got to be on some level with Jesus to be able to take his place. I couldn't do that. You couldn't do that. The greatest Christian workers couldn't do that. But yet the Holy Spirit can.

Dr. Glenn R. Kreider

In the last day he has with his disciples before his crucifixion, in the Upper Room Discourse, Jesus is talking with his disciples about what is to follow, what is to come. He's told them multiple times, over and over again — they still don't believe him — that he's on his way to die and will be raised again. In John's gospel, as he records that discourse — the only one of the Gospels who tells us that story — Jesus tells his disciples the shocking news, shocking to them, that he is leaving. That's not the most shocking thing. He tells them that they should be glad that he is leaving; it's good that he is leaving, because if he leaves then he will go to the Father and the Father will send the Spirit. And we could talk about the language he uses there, the specific words he uses, which are important, as he refers to the Spirit as “another of the same kind” — *allos* not *heteros*. But I think the strongest argument out of that discourse is that Jesus, who is well known to his disciples as God — he is the way, the truth and the life; he says in the discourse too that “I and the Father are one” — that he promises them that when he goes to the Father, then the Father will send another one like him. “You already know him,” he says, “because I've been with you.” Of course the disciples are confused. They don't even know who the Father is. Philip asks that question. But as we read now in the light of, after the coming of the Spirit, and understand, as they did beginning on the day of Pentecost, that the Spirit, who was sent from the Father because of the Son, is God like the Father and the Son is — exactly the argument that Peter makes, then, on the day of Pentecost when he says that “this Jesus whom you crucified has now ascended to the Father and has poured out the Holy Spirit which you now see and hear.”

Question 8:**How are the Trinitarian formulas in the New Testament helpful to our understanding of pneumatology?****Dr. Steve McKinion**

There are a number of important Trinitarian formulas in the New Testament, in the Gospels as well as in the epistles, and they help us to see how these New Testament writers, the apostles, understood the work of God in Christ, beginning with the Gospels, for example. In the Gospels, the Trinitarian formulas appear at Jesus' baptism most clearly where the Father is speaking. He says, "This is my son in whom I'm well pleased," and then the Spirit descends on him in his baptism — very much formulaic in the way that the gospel writer presents this. At the end of Matthew, there is the command from Jesus to go and to make disciples of all nations, and he tells them that they're to baptize "in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit" — very formulaic. Paul in his epistles does the same thing where he's regularly talking about God and the Son and the Spirit, always in formulaic terms. What these formulas enable us to do as Christians, and as theologians, is to understand that the apostles are preaching to us the work of God that is triune, that the Father, the Son and the Spirit are all at work in salvation just as the Father and the Son and the Spirit were all at work in creation. What this tells us about the Spirit, then, is that he has a very important role in God's work, in the economy of God... So, when the formulas in the New Testament are applied to God's work in these various ways, the Spirit is always associated and included with this, which helps us to see that when God works, he works by means of his Spirit's activity in the lives of the individuals that he's working in.

Dr. Dennis E. Johnson

The Trinitarian formulas of the New Testament help us to understand that the Holy Spirit is fully divine and fully personal. To take two examples, in the Great Commission, Jesus commands us to baptize people "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" — one name: Father, Son and Spirit. So, we have one God, three persons. And Jesus is really echoing or alluding to the blessing that Aaron and his sons as priests were to give, were to place upon Israel in the Old Testament, that blessing that we know so well: "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you his peace." And then the comment in Numbers 6 is, "Thus they will put my name on my people." Well, we're putting the name of God, making the claim that we now belong to him in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. So, we see the Spirit as fully divine, equal with the Father and the Son, and fully personal, no less than the Father and the Son. Or if we take Paul's benediction at the end of 2 Corinthians 13: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit..." again there's a blessing in the name of the triune God, grace extended to us through the sacrifice of the Son ... motivated by the love of God the Father and then applied to us by the Holy Spirit as he has fellowship with us and communes with us.

He brings home to our hearts what the Son has accomplished for us in grace, which is what the Father has purposed for us in love.

Rev. Dr. Emad A. Mikhail (translation)

In several places in the New Testament, the Scripture talks about the Trinity in one phrase. For example, in the last commission of Jesus Christ, which he gave to his disciples, which we call the Great Commission in Matthew 28, he says:

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you (Matthew 28:19-20, ESV).

“Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” — the mention of the Holy Spirit in here assures us that he is equal to the Father and equal to the Son, or otherwise our glorious Lord would not have told us to baptize people in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. It’s not possible that we are going to baptize people in the name of an angel or in the name of a creature. So, this verse mentions the Trinity: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and that each one of them is God and he is one God. The same fact, we find it, in the apostolic benediction, which is written at the end of 2 Corinthians 13, which says:

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all (2 Corinthians 13:14, ESV).

Again we see the Scripture puts the Holy Spirit on the same level with the Father and on the same level with the Son, and when he wanted to bless his people, he blessed them in the name of the three of them: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. All this assures to us the person of the Holy Spirit and also assures to us the divinity of the Holy Spirit, and he is completely equal to God the Father and to God the Son.

Question 9:

How does the ontological Trinity differ from the economic Trinity?

Dr. P. J. Buys

All three persons in the Trinity are coeternal, coequal, co-powerful in their being — that means their ontology. They are one. But there is apparent separation of some “functions,” that means the work, or the economy of the three persons among the members of the Godhead. For example, the Father chooses who he will save — who will be saved — the Son redeems them, and the Holy Spirit seals them.

Dr. Dinorah Méndez (translation)

In light of the teaching that God is one, and that all three persons are divine, the only explanation that could emerge is the doctrine of the Trinity. So, theologians throughout history have handled this using two terms: the “ontological” Trinity, which is a very philosophical term that has to do with the essence of God — God in essence is three persons — and the “economic” Trinity, that has to do with its function and the idea that these three persons have had three distinct principal functions. Not that they didn’t all participate, for example, in creation. All three participated. In salvation, all three persons are involved. In the Christian life, the three persons are active, but each with a different function. Now, there are people who favor only the economic, or *functional*, Trinity, and they think, “Well, God is one, but he functions in different ways.” And this can lead us to deviate from the biblical teaching, because the Bible doesn’t talk about God’s “modes of operation,” but it speaks of three distinct persons — the ontological Trinity, the Trinity in essence. The three persons exist in reality. They’re not just operating modes of one God, but they’re three persons, and of course, each one has his functions. So, we must always affirm these two things in a balanced way — what we might call the *essential* Trinity, instead of “ontological,” so we don’t sound too technical, and the *functional* Trinity, rather than saying the “economic” Trinity, which is sometimes not a very clear term. So, I prefer to use “Trinity in essence” and “Trinity in function,” and to affirm the two things in a balanced way.

Dr. Bruce Little

One might ask the question, well, why do we talk about ontological Trinity and the economic Trinity? There’s only one Trinity. How should we talk about it in two different ways? Well, we need to talk about it in two different ways simply because we have a couple of statements by Jesus that raise some questions. For example, Jesus says in John 10:30, “I and the Father are one.” Now, they clearly understood what Jesus was saying, for in fact, they take up stones to stone him. And when he says, “Why?” They said, “Because you, being a man, make yourself God.” So they clearly understood, Jesus says, “I and the Father are one.” But now later, and I believe it’s in John 14:28, Jesus says, “The Father is greater than I.” Now, that’s perplexing, and the way we talk about that is we talk about the first statement as referencing the *ontological* Trinity, and the second what we call the *economic* or the *functional* Trinity. So, when we look at the Trinity, we have a word. We use “God” and we have to use it two different ways. There’s the concept of God when we talk about persons, and there’s a sense of God-ness when we talk about his nature. So, the ontological Trinity is focusing on the nature of God, his essence — or as the folks in Nicea said, his “*ousia*” — so that there is only one nature, and the Father and the Word and the Spirit all share the same nature. So, we say God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. That’s ontological. It has to do with the nature of being. Now, the economic Trinity has to do with function, and resides in the person, so you can have the same nature but the different persons function differently. Now, I would argue they function differently based upon the properties that they have. So, the Son can say “the Father is greater than I” only in function, in that the Father sends the Son. So, that makes in that sense, functionally, the Father greater than the Son. And when we

do this, then you see we set a pattern for all of reality where we make the distinction within the Trinity, we differentiate between the persons. Now, if they were all God, and they didn't persons and different functions, we'd have no way to distinguish them. They would just kind of be a glob, but no person. And you see that becomes a wonderful pattern for all of creation. You and I are human beings, so we share the same ontological oneness, but we're different because we're different persons, and so we *function* differently, and we can distinguish one as distinguished one from another. So, this idea of ontological Trinity and economic Trinity is very important as it helps us to understand how could Jesus say in John 10:30, "I and the Father are one," and then in John 14:28, "The Father is greater than I." It's wonderfully explained just by understanding the difference between economic Trinity and ontological Trinity.

Dr. John McKinley

So, the economic Trinity is God at work, it is God's involvement in the creation, and it's a term that is trying to explain what we know of God based on things that he does. So, we know that there are three who are God because in creation we have the Father who sends the Son and the Son who sends the Spirit, and they are at work in these different ways in our lives and in creation. But we also have revelation of God in himself, in a sense, God at home, God as he was and always will be if there had never been creation. And so the ontological Trinity is the same God at work in creation, but God in an inner life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit relating to each other eternally. And the manifestation of God at work, the economic Trinity, is a reflection of God as he is eternally. So, even though we can't chase God down or reach back into history before the universe, we can still know what God always has been and what God always will be apart from relation to us, because there is a consistency between who he is with what he does. So, we only have God as what he does. He speaks to us, he interacts with us, but he is the same God as he always is, so economic Trinity gives us the ontological Trinity, and we know God in himself. We have true knowledge of God. We're not ultimately at a distance from him, because he is true in who he is based on the things that he does.

Question 10:

How should we acknowledge and respond to the divinity of the Holy Spirit in our worship and prayers?

Dr. Uche Anizor

The proper response to the Spirit in our worship is a tricky matter. On the one hand, we affirm that the Spirit is God and so deserving of worship. One of the creeds says that he is to be worshiped together with the Father and the Son. And so, clearly ... it's appropriate to worship the Spirit. However, when you read Scripture, we find that the Spirit is always pointing away from himself. Right? So, Jesus says that the Spirit is going to reveal things that Jesus said. He's going to point you to Jesus, so that the Spirit is, so to speak, self-effacing. And so, what do we do with that? On the one

hand, he's God, to be worshiped, and it's proper to worship him. On the other hand, he's always pointing away from himself. I would say that our worship should primarily focus on the ordering of the gospel: the Father sending the Son and the Spirit pointing us back to the Son who points us back to the Father. But on the other hand, it's very appropriate for us, especially in particular seasons of the Christian life, to be reminded that the Spirit is God, and so to direct ourselves in our worship services and our own lives, to actually pray and sing songs to the Spirit just by way of a reminder that the Spirit is not just some impersonal force or some third other, but that the Spirit is God himself, worthy of worship.

Dr. Alan Hultberg

Of course, the Holy Spirit is equally divine as the Father and the Son. And in fact, the Holy Spirit is the presence of God in our lives. Our interaction with God happens through the Holy Spirit. And so, I believe it's appropriate to render worship to the Holy Spirit, to render... to perhaps even address our prayers to the Holy Spirit, though, of course, the biblical model is that we pray to God, to God the Father, in the power of the Spirit, with the assistance of the Spirit, and through the authority or the person of the Son, through the Lord Jesus. But the Spirit is God, and it's not inappropriate to worship the Spirit or to address prayers to the Spirit, it seems to me.

Question 11:

If the Father has authority over the Son and Spirit, does that mean he always gets his way when they disagree?

Dr. Danny Akin

You know, one of the interesting challenges of Christians is to understand the inner working relationship of the triune God, and there are some things we do know and some things we don't know. Let me share very quickly what we do know. We do know that whatever it is that makes God, God, the Father is all of that, the Son is all of that, and the Spirit is all of that. We also know that the Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Spirit, and the Spirit is not the Father. There's one God, yet they exist in some type of mysterious unity as one God, three persons. Alright. It is also clear in the New Testament particularly, that the Son gladly and joyfully submits to the Father, and that the Spirit gladly and joyfully submits both to the Father and to the Son. So, then a question I guess could be raised theoretically, well, what happens when the Father, the Son and the Spirit are communing with one another and they have a disagreement? I guess the Father always gets his way since he is the one to whom both of them give authority and acknowledge authority and give submission. Well, that's wrong thinking because there's no sense in which the Bible ever even remotely intimates that there's a disagreement between the Father, the Son and the Spirit. They are always of one mind. They are always of one will. They are always united in any and every issue including redemption. You think of the doctrine of salvation, and it is the Father who initiated salvation, it is the Son who accomplished our salvation, and it is the Spirit who applies our salvation, and they work in an

absolute perfect unity and harmony, not just in that area, but they operate in that way in *every* area. So, any idea that there's ever a disagreement among the triune God is a ... creation of man's imagination. It is nothing that you can find in God's revealed Word.

Dr. Tim Foster

As St. Augustine said the rule of the catholic faith is this: when the Scriptures say of the Son that he is less than the Father, the Scriptures mean in respect to the assumption of humanity — that is, the economic Trinity — but when the Scriptures point out that he is equal, they are understood in respect to his deity — that is, the ontological Trinity. So, what Augustine is saying is, any sense of subordination of the Son to the Father is only the case when Jesus, when the second person of the Trinity, has become human, but when it's speaking about the equality, well, that's true of God ontologically... So, when we see God the Father exercising authority over God the Son, that is the economic Trinity at work. That is God the Son obeying and submitting himself to the authority of God the Father. But in eternity, in the ontological Trinity, no such subordination exists, at least not according to Augustine. Then there's the question of the will. It's very important, lest we fall into heresy, that we recognize that each member of the Godhead has his own will. To say that there's only one will within the Godhead is heresy. But, the will of each person in the Godhead is perfectly in accord with the other; such is the nature of God in his oneness, because always when we're talking about the Trinity, we're trying to protect the oneness of God and the distinctions of the person. In order to protect the distinctions of the persons, we want to say they each have their own will. But in order to protect the oneness of God, we want to say that the will of the Son is the same as the will of the Father is the same as the will of the Spirit. And so, there can never be a time when the Father wills one thing, the Son another and the Spirit another, and the Son and the Spirit have to come in line begrudgingly with the Father. That's not the nature of a monotheistic God.

Dr. Glen G. Scorgie

Perhaps you've heard the question, if the Father has authority over the Son and the Spirit, does he always get his way when they disagree? Now, you'll notice that in that question there is the assumption that on occasion they will disagree. Now, that's an assumption we need to contest at the outset. We believe that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are infinite and *equal* in their knowledge, in their wisdom, in their power, in their intrinsic goodness, and so if they're playing equally at that level, so to speak, it's inconceivable that there would be any disagreement, because the disagreement would imply that one of the members had an inferior grasp of the situation and the obligations of the infinite Holy God. This is not going to happen! And so, the need for authority, which we recognize in human relations due to asymmetrical competence and goodness, certainly does not apply to the Holy Trinity who exists in this amazing infinite and eternal harmony because they are, in the fullest sense, on the same page. Now, we do know that in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus, fully human, feeling our frailty, has to submit to the Father's will and say, "Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done." But be assured, that is not due to the

limitations of the divinity of the Son or his inferiority in relationship to the Father in their eternal relationships, but indicative of what it's like to be a human being struggling in our finitude and our limitations with the call of God upon our lives.

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We Believe in the Holy Spirit

LESSON
TWO

IN THE WORLD



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We Believe in the Holy Spirit

Lesson Two

In the World

INTRODUCTION

At various places and times, some philosophers have proposed that God created the world and then left it alone. And it's been running independently of him ever since. There are elements of this thinking in the writings of ancient Greek philosophers, for instance. But it became more popular in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the West through the philosophy known as "Deism." Deism famously described God as a divine watchmaker and creation as a watch. It taught that God created and wound the watch, he put it on the shelf and let it run. And he hasn't touched it since.

But Scripture paints a very different picture. To the true God, creation isn't a watch. It's a kingdom, populated by citizens. And God actively sustains and governs his kingdom, and conducts relationships with its people. And the person of the Trinity who most directly engages the world in these ways is the Holy Spirit.

This is the second lesson in our series, *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, and we've entitled it, "In the World." In this lesson, we'll focus on the Holy Spirit's activity in the creation as a whole.

We'll investigate four aspects of the Holy Spirit's work in the world. First, we'll explain his work of creation when the universe began. Second, we'll look at his ongoing work of providence, by which he sustains and governs the creation. Third, we'll consider the revelation he provides throughout creation. And fourth, we'll mention the common grace he expresses to humanity at large. Let's look first at the Spirit's work of creation.

CREATION

Question number 15 of the Westminster Larger Catechism, published in 1647, asks:

What is the work of creation?

Listen to the catechism's answer:

The work of creation is that wherein God did in the beginning, by the word of his power, make of nothing the world, and all things therein, for himself, within the space of six days, and all very good.

In this answer, the catechism identifies God's creative work primarily with the initial creation of the universe. But the Scripture references commonly associated with

this answer acknowledge that creation also includes making new things on a continual basis, such as individual human beings.

In a prior lesson, we said that the Apostles' Creed attributes the work of creation to the Father. And it's absolutely true that the Father was the initiator of creation. But Scripture also makes it clear that the Son and the Holy Spirit were involved in this work. For instance, 1 Corinthians 8:6 says that creation comes from the Father and through the Son. And theologians have generally agreed that the Holy Spirit was the person of the Trinity that carried out the work, according to the plan of the Father and by means of the Son.

Throughout history, theologians have appealed to Genesis 1 to show the Holy Spirit's initial creative work. This chapter describes how God made the universe and all its inhabitants "by the word of his power." Listen to how the account begins in Genesis 1:1-2:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters (Genesis 1:1-2).

As we saw in a prior lesson, the Old Testament doesn't identify the Holy Spirit as a distinct person within the Godhead. Nevertheless, it does indicate that God created the world by his Spirit. And in light of the New Testament's revelation about God's Spirit, it's legitimate to see these acts of creation as works of the Holy Spirit.

Genesis 1 says that during creation, the Holy Spirit was "hovering over the waters." The Hebrew word *rachaph* (רָחַף), translated "hovering," is used only one other time in the Pentateuch. In Deuteronomy 32:11, Moses used the metaphor of an eagle caring for its young to describe God's relationship with Israel. This passage uses *rachaph* (רָחַף) to convey the idea of a powerful bird caring for and nurturing its offspring. So, when we read that God's Spirit hovered over the waters of creation, the implication is that the Spirit was the parent that molded and nurtured the creation according to God's word.

John Owen, the Puritan writer and theologian who lived from 1616–1683, spoke of the Holy Spirit's creative power in his work, *A Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit*. In book 1, chapter 4, he described the Holy Spirit's work in Genesis 1 this way:

Without him all was a dead sea, a confused deep, with darkness upon it, able to bring forth nothing ... but by the moving of the Spirit of God upon it, the principles of all those kinds, sorts, and forms of things, which ... make up its host and ornament, were communicated unto it.

Although the language here is somewhat archaic, Owen's point was that before the Holy Spirit shaped creation, it consisted only of chaotic, lifeless waters. But when the Spirit moved, he created order and life.

As we saw in Genesis 1:1, 2, before the Holy Spirit's work, creation was "formless and empty." The picture is of darkness and chaos. There was no light, no sense

of order or form, no plants, and no creatures. But as we read in Genesis 1:3-31, the Spirit of God changed all that. During the first three days, he dealt with the formlessness of creation. On the first day, he created light, as well as the domains of day and night. On the second day, he created an expanse that divided the waters. We commonly refer to this expanse as the atmosphere or sky, which separates the water-filled clouds from the world below. On the third day, he collected the waters in such a way that he created dry land, and also the plants that grow on the land. During these first three days, he formed the boundaries of creation by ordering the day and night, the sky and the waters, and the dry land with its vegetation.

During the next three days — days four through six of the creation week — the Spirit of God addressed creation's emptiness. And he did this by filling the various domains he had previously created. On day four, he created the sun, moon and stars to fill the domains of day and night that he'd created on the first day. On day five, he created sea creatures and birds, filling the domains of the sea and the sky that he'd created on the second day. And on day six, he created land animals and human beings to fill the domain of the dry land that he'd created on the third day.

Besides Genesis 1, several other Scriptures also attribute God's creative work to his Spirit. For instance, Isaiah 40:12-13 offers this description of the Spirit's role in forming creation:

Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, And marked off the heavens by the span, And calculated the dust of the earth by the measure, And weighed the mountains in a balance And the hills in a pair of scales? Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, Or as His counselor has informed Him? (Isaiah 40:12-13, NASB)

The implied answer, of course, is “no one.” Only the Spirit of God has done these things. And Psalm 104:24-30 talks about the Spirit's work in filling creation this way:

How many are your works, O Lord! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number — living things both large and small... When you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust. When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth (Psalm 104:24-30).

This passage mentions the creation of things like waters, plants, and creatures. And it attributes this work to the Spirit.

During the creation week the Holy Spirit was very active. He did play an active role. It says in ... Genesis 1:2, it says that the Holy Spirit hovered or was hovering over the face of the waters... And as I've thought about that, I've thought about how similar that is to what the Holy Spirit does over the heart of a person whom he is regenerating. I think that “hovering” refers somehow to the Holy Spirit imparting

life. You know, a lot about Genesis 1 I don't understand, but apparently there was some material universe there over which the Holy Spirit was hovering, and that was a prelude or a prerequisite to God creating everything out of what was there. So, the Holy Spirit hovered over the face of the waters. He, the Son of God, the Father, all of the persons of the Trinity were active during creation.

— Rev. Mike Osborne

Having looked at the Holy Spirit's activity in the world during the creation week, let's turn our attention to his works of providence throughout the rest of history.

PROVIDENCE

Theological traditions sometimes understand the details of providence in different ways. But, in general, Evangelicals understand it to be:

God's work of governing and upholding all creation, including creatures, actions and things

Basically, providence encompasses everything the Holy Spirit does in the world throughout history. For the sake of simplicity, though, we'll limit our discussion to its general workings. And we'll deal with many of its components as separate topics in this lesson and in the lessons that follow.

For the most part, the passages of Scripture that speak about providence don't distinguish between the persons of the Trinity. And we should readily admit that the entire Trinity is involved in God's providential work. But in these passages, there are still enough references to the Spirit for us to emphasize his role.

We'll outline the Holy Spirit's work of providence in two parts. First, we'll focus on his work in the realm of nature. And second, we'll mention his work specifically among humanity. Let's look at nature first.

NATURE

When we examine nature from a scientific perspective, it looks like it could be self-sustaining. Weather, geography and biology appear to be relatively mechanical systems with consistent, natural rules. The same can be said for other natural sciences like astronomy, chemistry, physics, geology, and so on. But Scripture teaches that in order for us to understand nature properly, we have to know that God created it, and that he governs and upholds all of its systems.

As the psalmist wrote in Psalm 135:6-7:

The Lord does whatever pleases him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths. He makes clouds rise from the ends of the earth; he sends lightning with the rain and brings out the wind from his storehouses (Psalm 135:6-7).

The most dramatic demonstration of God's providential power in nature was undoubtedly the flood in Noah's day. Genesis 6–9 indicates that God flooded the entire world in response to humanity's wickedness. And Genesis 6:3 points to the role of the Spirit in carrying out this judgment. God's power in nature is also exhibited by the plagues on Egypt in Exodus 7–12. We see it in the parting of the Red Sea in Exodus 14. And the Spirit's most astounding power over nature is arguably during the Israelites' battle with the Amorites when the sun stood still in the sky "till the nation avenged itself on its enemies," as we read in Joshua 10:13.

God himself explained his ordinary providential control over nature in Job 38–41. He mentioned his power over the earth, the sea, day and night, weather, and over a host of animals. And while the book of Job itself doesn't distinguish between the persons of the Trinity, Job 34:14, 15 points to God's Spirit as the one that carries out his divine will in the world.

Scripture also teaches that the Holy Spirit governs the world in such a way that he regularly renews its features and governs the populations of its creatures. For example, as Psalm 135 tells us, he makes rain, clouds, wind and other elements. And in places like Psalm 65 we see that he changes the earth's geography by creating rivers, valleys, mountains, and deserts. And in many other places, he brings new life in the form of plants, animals and people. Every new thing that appears in creation is the work of the Spirit.

You'll recall that Psalm 104 emphasizes the Holy Spirit's works of creation. The same psalm also speaks of providence. It talks about how God makes springs pour water into ravines. It praises the way he provides food for animals. It admires the life he gives to plants and trees, and the homes he provides for birds and other animals. And it assures us that he controls the sun and moon, night and day, and yearly seasons. These all appear to be natural systems. But God controls them all. Listen to Psalm 104:24-30:

O Lord ... the earth is full of your creatures... These all look to you to give them their food at the proper time... [W]hen you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things... [W]hen you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust. When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth (Psalm 104:24-30).

The psalmist knew that God doesn't literally prepare food for every creature, and then feed it by hand. He understood that animals eat according to cycles and hierarchies that we sometimes refer to as "food chains." From an earthly perspective, this process appears to be a natural, self-regulating system. But Scripture looks past this superficial understanding to see that God governs these behaviors. And we see similar ideas in Isaiah 34:15, 16.

The psalmist also said that God manages creation in a way that perpetuates life, but limits it, too. In particular, no creature dies without God's involvement. He sustains their breath, or spirit, within them to keep them alive. He removes that breath or spirit when it's time for them to die. And the psalmist attributed this type of interaction with creation to God's Spirit.

Jesus appealed to a similar idea in his Sermon on the Mount when he encouraged his audience to stop worrying about the necessities of life. Listen to Jesus' words in Matthew 6:26-33:

Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them... See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these... [S]eek first [God's] kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well (Matthew 6:26-33).

Jesus' point was that if people would pursue God's kingdom and righteousness, God would work through his providence to meet their daily needs.

Well, when we're talking about the providence of God, what we're talking about is God's ongoing care for his creation and all his creatures. So, we don't just believe that God created the world and kind of wandered off to do something else. No, God continues to sustain the world by his word of power. Through his Word, through his Spirit, God continues to sustain the world. So, we think about God providing what we need: food, water, air, all those things we take for granted, God's providing them.

— Rev. Dr. Justyn Terry

We should pause to point out that Jesus attributed God's works of providence to the Father. He did this to emphasize the Father's authority over his kingdom. But theologians commonly recognize that while the Father decrees providential work, it's the Holy Spirit who carries out these decrees. We see this in places like Matthew 10:20 and Luke 11:13. And we find related ideas in places like John 15:26; Acts 2:33; and 1 Peter 1:2.

Having spoken of providence in nature, let's consider how the Holy Spirit works in humanity.

HUMANITY

Insofar as humanity is part of the natural world, the same things we've said about nature also apply to us. God manages and governs our environment, as we see in Psalm 135:6, 7. He controls our food sources, and even the success of our reproduction, as we read in Deuteronomy 7:13. His Spirit is the source of our very lives, as we read in Job

33:4. And he doesn't do this only by sustaining the natural systems of the world. As we'll see, he also governs humanity by directly influencing our circumstances, our bodies, and even our minds.

As the Holy Spirit providentially governs the world, he influences human beings in many different ways. And this sometimes makes Christians uneasy, or even resentful. We worry that he might be violating our will, or pushing us to think and do sinful things. Sometimes we even accuse him of wrongdoing when he allows us to suffer. So, the first thing we should keep in mind is that the Holy Spirit never does anything sinful. He never mistreats or abuses us. And the second thing we should remember is that he's always working for the ultimate benefit of believers. Life might be painful now. But all the suffering we endure will eventually result in everlasting blessings. Now, different theological traditions have reconciled these ideas in different ways. But all Bible believers should affirm that the Holy Spirit's work of providence is always as good and as pure as the Spirit himself.

Listen to how Paul summarized the scope of providence in Acts 17:24-26:

The God who made the world and everything in it ... gives all men life and breath and everything else... [H]e determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live (Acts 17:24-26).

Paul seems to have had the Holy Spirit in mind, since he spoke of God as the one who gives us life and breath. And he indicated that the Spirit's providential work includes giving us everything we have, and governing the times and exact places that we live.

The Holy Spirit doesn't just maintain the world so that we can live in it. He actually governs the specific circumstances of our lives, and, in some sense, the choices we make. Of course, we all acknowledge this aspect of the Holy Spirit's work every time we affirm the miraculous healings and resurrections found in Scripture. And we embrace the Spirit's providence in our own lives when we pray, believing that God is both able and willing to change our circumstances, our health, our lifespans, and even our minds and spirits.

Scripture records some rather extreme examples of the Holy Spirit governing the lives of human beings. For instance, in Deuteronomy 2:30, 31, Moses taught that God made Sihon king of Heshbon stubborn in spirit and obstinate in heart. And he did this so that the Israelites would defeat Sihon and his army, and their country would fall under Israelite control.

And in Exodus 10:20, 27 and 11:10, God hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, so that he refused to release the Israelites from slavery. As a result, Pharaoh and his people were subjected to the plagues of darkness and the death of the firstborn.

Psalms 135:6-12 memorializes the Spirit's providential control of Sihon, Pharaoh and other kings in this way:

The Lord does whatever pleases him, in the heavens and on the earth ... He struck down the firstborn of Egypt ... He struck down many nations and killed mighty kings — Sihon king of the Amorites, Og king of Bashan and all the kings of Canaan — and he gave their land ... to his people Israel (Psalm 135:6-12).

The observation that God does whatever pleases him is made many times in Scripture, often as an affirmation that God actively upholds and directs human history.

As one other example, in Daniel 4, God punished Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, by taking away both his royal authority and his sanity. Nebuchadnezzar lived among the wild animals and ate grass until the appointed time had passed. Then, God restored his sanity and his throne. And in his newfound humility, Nebuchadnezzar reflected on God's providential power. Listen to what Nebuchadnezzar said in Daniel 4:35:

[God] does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?" (Daniel 4:35).

Just as in Psalm 135, Nebuchadnezzar observed that God does as he pleases. He governs human decisions and actions to accomplish his purposes. Or as we read in Psalm 33:10-11:

The Lord foils the plans of the nations... But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever (Psalm 33:10-11).

Whenever we think about the work of the Holy Spirit in general providence, in things like governments or kings or princes or nations around the world, we have to remember that Romans 13 tells us that governments have been ordained to punish evil in the world and to promote good... But I think the most important thing for us to remember about the Holy Spirit's work among governments and kings and nations is what the Bible tells us about the Messiah, the King whom God will establish to rule over the new creation. Isaiah 11:2 speaks of him as the one who has the Spirit of the Lord resting on him... He has the Spirit of wisdom. He has the Spirit of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might and knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And because the great Messiah has the Spirit of God on him in that way, he not only restrains evil, but he promotes good perfectly. He promotes righteousness throughout the entire new creation. So, as we think about the work of the Spirit when it comes to politics and political leaders, we can think of this more general sense in which he restrains evil in unbelieving politicians, especially, but even believing politicians for that matter, so that they can become those who punish evil and promote good. But the premiere expression of this is Holy Spirit being poured out upon the Messiah so that he establishes righteousness in the world from one end of the earth to the other.

— Dr. Richard L. Pratt, Jr.

God's providential governance of humanity extends beyond kings and nations to every human being, and to every aspect of our lives. And just as God influences our circumstances, he also governs our hearts and minds. We've already seen how this happens with national leaders. And the same thing happens with every other individual. Listen to what Psalm 33 says in verses 13-15:

From heaven the Lord looks down and sees all mankind ... he who forms the hearts of all, who considers everything they do (Psalm 33:13-15).

In his providence, the Spirit forms the hearts of all mankind. He molds our affections, beliefs, commitments, and desires — everything that contributes to who we are and what we do.

When it comes to humanity at large, the Holy Spirit's providential work is sometimes the terrifying implementation of divine judgment. Again, we can think of the global flood in Noah's day, or the plagues on Egypt. And many of his other works are similarly devastating for unbelievers. Deuteronomy 29:4, Isaiah 6:9, 10, John 12:37-41, and Romans 11:8 all speak of God refusing to renew the hearts and minds of the wicked in order to keep them from repenting and being saved. And listen to Romans 1:24-28 where Paul discussed the judgment of the wicked:

God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts ... [and] to shameful lusts... [S]ince they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done (Romans 1:24-28).

Divine providence should be a frightening prospect for sinners. It means that God doesn't always wait until the day of judgment to punish wickedness. And it reveals the kind of judgment that's coming. But in the same way, it also means that God doesn't always wait until the last day to bless his people. Besides caring for our needs and protecting our lives, he works in our hearts and minds to cause us to obey him. As Paul wrote in Philippians 2:13:

It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose (Philippians 2:13).

This understanding of the Holy Spirit's providential treatment of both believers and unbelievers is seen in several Old Testament passages. In Isaiah 29:16, and 45:9, and Jeremiah 18:1-19, God is represented as a potter and human beings as clay. And in each case, Scripture makes the point that the potter has the right to make whatever he wants with his clay. Using this metaphor, Paul summarized this aspect of divine providence in Romans 9:18-21, when he wrote:

God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden. One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?" But who are you, O

man, to talk back to God? “Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, ‘Why did you make me like this?’” Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use? (Romans 9:18-21).

Here, Paul said that the potter’s right over the clay even extended to hardening people’s hearts, causing them to oppose him and to fall under his judgment.

As we’ve suggested, different theological traditions understand the Spirit’s work differently. Consider the Holy Spirit’s providential work in bringing people to faith in Christ. We can illustrate the Spirit’s work of conversion in terms of two roads or paths. One path represents receiving Christ as Savior. And the other represents rejecting him. All evangelical Christians should agree that the Holy Spirit providentially causes people to encounter the gospel, and to be faced with this decision. But there are at least three major views regarding the Spirit’s involvement in this process.

First, some theological traditions believe that human beings have the natural ability to choose either the path to salvation or the path to destruction. In this view, the Spirit’s providential work focuses on bringing us into an encounter with the gospel.

The second view agrees that the Holy Spirit orchestrates our lives so that we encounter the gospel. But it also believes that fallen human beings lack the natural ability to respond positively to the gospel. In our fallen state, we would always choose the path of destruction. So, in this view, the Holy Spirit provides “prevenient grace,” or grace that comes before saving faith, that enables us to choose the path of salvation. Once we receive this grace, both paths are open to us, and we can choose either to receive or to reject Christ.

The third major view agrees that the Holy Spirit causes us to encounter the gospel and that we lack the natural ability to choose life. But, in this view, the Holy Spirit provides “irresistible grace” to those he chooses to save. This grace not only *enables* us to choose the path of salvation, but actually *ensures* that we will.

Clearly, there are significant disagreements between these views. Still, all three affirm the Holy Spirit’s influence and governance over the lives of human beings, and, to one degree or another, even over the choices we make.

Jesus emphasizes this important ministry of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the world, which consists of people who are hostile toward God. The Spirit is at work to convict people who are hostile toward God — unbelievers — to convict them to underscore their guiltiness, to underscore where they’re going wrong in relationship to sin, self-righteousness and worldly judgment. That is, the Spirit helps unbelievers understand that they have never believed in Jesus Christ, their only hope for salvation. And the Spirit underscores the fact that many unbelievers are resting on their own self-righteousness in order to merit favor or earn the love of God for salvation, which is impossible... So, the Spirit is at work with a divine disturbance of unbelievers, pointing out that they are in their sin, that they are self-righteous, that they are engaged in a worldly form of judgment, and

all of this is wrong. And he pushes them, prompts them to embrace Jesus Christ... So, the Spirit is at work powerfully in the lives of unbelievers to convict them and to cause them to be born again.

— Dr. Gregg R. Allison

Having considered the Holy Spirit's work in the world in terms of creation and providence, we're ready to turn to revelation.

REVELATION

There are many ways to define revelation. But in general, we can say that it's:

God's work of making himself known to human beings

Revelation is really a subcategory of providence because it's part of the way the Holy Spirit governs creation in general, and human beings in particular. And revelation takes many forms. We can learn about God by observing creation. We can see his characteristics reflected in ourselves and in other people. He can send angelic messengers, or human evangelists and teachers. He can give visions and auditions and dreams. He's given us his word in Scripture. And he can even speak to our hearts directly through inward leading and illumination to help us interpret and apply Scripture.

We'll discuss the Holy Spirit's work of revelation in two parts. First, we'll survey some theological models for categorizing revelation. And second, we'll look at what the Bible says about the Holy Spirit's role as the source of revelation. Let's look first at some theological models for categorizing revelation.

MODELS

Theologians have created many systems for categorizing the revelation the Holy Spirit provides. But for our purposes in this lesson, we'll limit our discussion to five of the more common models.

Natural and Supernatural Revelation

One early distinction theologians made was between natural and supernatural revelation. In this lesson, we'll use the term "natural revelation" to refer to knowledge of God that comes through the ordinary workings of the natural world and providence. This includes every creature, object, substance and principle in creation. For instance, Psalm 19:1 speaks of natural revelation in this way:

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands (Psalm 19:1).

By contrast, supernatural revelation is knowledge of God that comes directly from God, or from his messengers. It includes miracles, prophecy, the inspiration of Scripture, and every other divine intervention and extraordinary work of providence.

The distinction between natural and supernatural revelation rightly recognizes that God uses many different means of revelation. These include the natural universe, the preternatural realm of angels and demons, and direct communication with human beings. It also recognizes that, because God created all that exists, everything and everyone reveal something about him. However, it has the weakness of ignoring that *all* revelation is ultimately supernatural. After all, the natural world was created by God, and relies on God's providence to uphold and govern it.

Because the Holy Spirit is the ultimate source of all revelation, it's helpful to think in terms of a continuum between natural and supernatural revelation. For instance, a direct, audible word from God would be highly supernatural. An inspired human prophet would be somewhat less supernatural. And observing God's creative hand in the natural universe would be the least supernatural.

Redemptive and Non-redemptive Revelation

A second set of categories sometimes used to describe revelation is that of redemptive and non-redemptive revelation. Redemptive revelation is knowledge of God with the intent to accomplish salvation through Christ. For instance, the knowledge that God is merciful and forgiving is generally considered redemptive because it presupposes humanity's need for redemption. If we had never sinned, we wouldn't need mercy or forgiveness. But non-redemptive revelation is knowledge of God that doesn't take sinfulness or redemption into account. For example, the knowledge that God is the omnipotent Creator would be considered non-redemptive because it doesn't teach us about our sinfulness or our need for redemption. God's power is always the same, regardless of our sinfulness.

It's important to recognize that many types of knowledge are non-redemptive from one perspective, but redemptive from another. For instance, recognizing God's glory — normally non-redemptive — might be the humbling experience that drives a sinner to repentance. Moreover, redemptive knowledge is only redemptive for those who repent. For those who don't, it serves as a further means of their judgment. We see this in passages like Matthew 11:21, 22, and Isaiah 6:9, 10.

General and Special Revelation

A third set of categories many theologians use is that of general and special revelation. General and special revelation have been defined in different ways by different theologians. Some theologians focus their distinction on the means by which the revelation is given.

In this view, general revelation is roughly equivalent to natural revelation because it comes through natural means. And special revelation is roughly equivalent to supernatural revelation because it comes through supernatural or preternatural means.

In other traditions, the focus is on the audience that receives the revelation. General revelation is addressed to human beings in general, so that it's potentially accessible to everyone, while special revelation is available only to a select few.

This model rightly recognizes that not all people receive the same revelation from God since there are clearly differences in our lives, our history, and even in our ability to receive revelation. For instance, those who are blind can't directly receive the visual aspects of general revelation. And some special revelation, like Scripture, is intended to be presented to everyone possible.

Another approach to these categories distinguishes between the content of general and special revelation. This approach is similar to non-redemptive and redemptive revelation. In this view, general revelation is intended for all human beings, irrespective of issues like sin and salvation. Correspondingly, special revelation is given to a select group of sinners for whom God intends salvation.

This has the benefit of acknowledging God's choice of certain people for salvation, as Paul taught in Romans 8:29, 30, and Ephesians 1:5, 11. It also emphasizes God's determination to take special steps to bring these people to faith and maturity in Christ. But it has some weaknesses. For instance, revelation that condemns sinners isn't general, because it takes sin into account. And it isn't special, because it isn't necessarily intended to save anyone.

Act and Word Revelation

A fourth model that theologians use to categorize the Holy Spirit's revelation consists of act and word revelation. Act revelation is God's self-revelation by means of his works and actions. And word revelation is his self-disclosure by means of inspired words, whether spoken or written.

This distinction is often helpful because it emphasizes the different methods God uses to communicate. It rightly recognizes that we can learn a lot about God by looking at his works. But, because God's actions can often be ambiguous, it also emphasizes the clarity of his words over his works.

In addition, it helps us see the interconnections between his words and actions — how his actions sometimes fulfill his words, and how his words sometimes explain his actions, and so on. For example, in Mark 3:22, Jesus was accused of curing demon-possessed people by the power of the devil. Clearly, that wasn't the case. He was doing it by the power of God. And the act revealed the Holy Spirit's power over Satan. But his audience didn't understand that. So, Jesus' word revelation in Mark 3:23-29 explains the significance of the act of exorcism.

Of course, one shortcoming of this approach to revelation is that it focuses primarily on God's dramatic, salvific acts, and on the words explaining them. In this sense, it tends to downplay less noteworthy revelation, like that found in the mundane workings of the natural world.

Mediate and Immediate Revelation

Finally, the fifth model we'll mention that's used to categorize revelation is mediate and immediate revelation. Mediate revelation comes to us through some form of medium or means, like creation, or a prophetic messenger, or Scripture. And immediate revelation comes to us directly from God, like the innate knowledge of God himself that he has placed in all people. Other types of immediate revelation include "illumination" and "inward leading" — divine gifts of knowledge or understanding that Scripture

frequently attributes to the work of the Holy Spirit. We see this in places like 1 Corinthians 2:9-16; Ephesians 1:17; Colossians 1:9; and 1 John 2:27.

This model reminds us to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's movements in our lives. But it can also be easily abused, since many people can't distinguish between inward leading and illumination, and thoughts and feelings that naturally come to them. And this raises some important questions: How can we determine the source of our thoughts, emotions, visions, auditions, dreams, and even our interpretations of Scripture? How can we know if they come from the Holy Spirit, or perhaps an angel, and are therefore reliable? How can we be sure we aren't deceiving ourselves or being deceived by a demonic spirit?

Passages like Acts 17:11, and 1 John 4:1 warn us that we shouldn't naively believe that every revelation, illumination, interpretation, and tradition is from the Holy Spirit. In fact, they encourage us to be skeptical, and to test every spirit and claim to see if they accord with God and Scripture.

With these models of revelation in mind, let's discuss the Holy Spirit as the source of revelation.

SOURCE

One thing all the theological models of revelation share in common is identifying God as the ultimate source of revelation. Because all revelation is from God, all revelation is infallibly true. And because it's true, it's also authoritative. It obligates us to believe what it teaches about God, and to respond by loving and obeying the God it reveals. But how do we know that the Holy Spirit, in particular, is directly involved with revealing God to us?

The Holy Spirit is on both sides of the act of communication in Scripture, both sending the message from God and making sure that it's received amongst God's people in order to be used for its intended purpose. On the sending side, 2 Peter ... tells us that holy men of God were carried along by the Holy Spirit, that God's Spirit used their life experience, their education, their abilities in knowing literary genres and being involved in historical circumstances to communicate God's interpretation of those events: God's Word. And so we call that the "doctrine of inspiration," that the Holy Spirit inspired these holy men of God. But Paul, in writing to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 2, also speaks about how on the receiving end the Holy Spirit is there, giving gifts to the body of Christ, gifts of teaching, gifts of discernment ... so that the message can be interpreted — spiritual truths being interpreted in spiritual ways — so that the message can be received and then accomplish its equipping purpose for the mission of God's people. We call that the "doctrine of illumination," that the Spirit illuminates God's people and gifts them so that the Spirit's message, the Word, can be received and then used in the way that God intends.

— Dr. Greg Perry

Scripture often says that revelation is delivered through God's works of creation and providence. And, as we've seen, the Holy Spirit played, and continues to play, an integral role in these divine works. Besides this, John 14:26; 1 Corinthians 2:4; and Ephesians 1:17 and 3:5, all identify the Spirit as the one who reveals God to us, including "the deep things of God," as we learn in 1 Corinthians 2:10. This is why John called him "the Spirit of truth" in John 14:17, 15:26, and 16:13. And in 1 John 5:6, John even said:

It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth (1 John 5:6).

Scripture indicates that the Holy Spirit provides us with every category of revelation we've looked at in this lesson. But it's still helpful to consider some types of revelation that the Bible explicitly attributes to him. For the sake of time, we'll mention just three. First, as we saw in a prior lesson, the Holy Spirit is responsible for the inspiration of prophecy and Scripture.

Inspiration of prophecy and Scripture

The Spirit's inspiration of prophecy and Scripture is mentioned in places like Acts 1:16, 4:25, and 28:25; Ephesians 3:4, 5; and Hebrews 9:8. It's also evident in the spiritual gift of prophecy mentioned in 1 Corinthians 14:1, and in the Spirit's ministry through the apostles described in John 14:26. As just one example, remember what Peter wrote in 2 Peter 1:20-21:

No prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21).

We read in the Bible that the human authors interacted with the Holy Spirit in order to bring about the Scriptures as we know them. There are many places where that's referred to in the New Testament, but perhaps most obviously is in 2 Peter 1 where Peter talks about the light shining in a dark place — speaking about God's revelation — and then goes on to say in verse 21, "For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." And you see there something of the interaction between humanity — man being carried along — and the Holy Spirit, who is doing the driving... And we have in the Scriptures fully human words and fully divine words so that the words written by a human being, because of God's intervention, become Spirit-filled ... inspired, infallible words for our benefit.

— Dr. Simon Vibert

Second, the Holy Spirit is directly associated with illumination and inward leading.

Illumination and inward leading

We mentioned illumination and inward leading in our discussion of immediate revelation. While these gifts aren't always distinct from one another in Scripture, we can still distinguish between them. "Illumination" is a divine gift of knowledge or understanding that's primarily *cognitive*. And "inward leading" is a divine gift of knowledge or understanding that's primarily *emotive* or *intuitive*. In 1 Corinthians 2:9-16, Paul described the Spirit's illumination and inward leading as a revelation of God's mind and thoughts to his people. Paul said that because the Spirit is God himself, he knows the mind and thoughts of God. And he reveals these to believers so that we can understand God's benevolent gifts to us.

Of course, we can also learn about God through various other means, such as creation and Scripture. But in 1 Corinthians 2, Paul pointed out that the Holy Spirit directly grants wisdom and insight to believers, which enable us to interpret the Spirit's other revelation accurately. This doesn't mean that we have the same authority to speak or interpret God's words as the apostles had. On the contrary, passages like John 14:26, and Ephesians 3:3-5, demonstrate that the apostles and prophets had unique authority and insight. Nevertheless, through inward leading and illumination, the Spirit still grants us cognitive and emotive knowledge of his revelation. We see something similar in Ephesians 1:17-18, where Paul wrote:

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened (Ephesians 1:17-18).

In this passage, Paul indicated that the Holy Spirit grants illumination to help us know God better, and inward leading to enlighten our hearts. We also find this idea in Colossians 1:9; and 1 John 2:27.

Third, another extremely common type of revelation associated with the Holy Spirit is the category of miracles, signs and wonders.

Miracles, signs and wonders

In Scripture, miracles, signs and wonders were extraordinary works of providence performed by the Holy Spirit. Scripture associates these works directly with the person of the Spirit in many passages, including Romans 15:19; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11; and Galatians 3:5. And this helps us see that the Spirit is the power behind all these extraordinary works in both the Old and New Testaments, even if he isn't always mentioned by name. Moreover, the Bible indicates that the purpose of these miracles,

signs and wonders was to confirm God's word to humanity — especially to unbelieving humanity. As we read in Hebrews 2:4:

God ... testified to [salvation] by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will (Hebrews 2:4).

As we learn here, the Holy Spirit provided miracles, signs and wonders as revelation testifying to the gospel.

Both the Old and the New Testaments confirm this revelatory function of miracles, signs and wonders. For instance, in Exodus 4, the Spirit performed signs through Moses, including turning his staff into a snake, and causing and curing leprosy. And he did this to convince Israel that Moses was to lead them. The plagues on Egypt were intended to prove to Pharaoh and his country that the God of Israel was the true God. So, they're called signs and wonders in places like Exodus 7:3, and 10:1, 2. The Spirit's miracles during Israel's wilderness wanderings are also called signs in Numbers 14:22 because they proved that Israel should follow Moses to the Promised Land. Deuteronomy 4:34, and many other places throughout the book, appeal to the signs and wonders from Israel's exodus as proof of God's covenant benevolence and faithfulness. And in 2 Samuel 7:23, Israel's conquest of the Promised Land is also said to have included signs and wonders proving that God favored his people and had power over the false Canaanite gods.

The Holy Spirit also empowered Old Testament prophets and others to perform miraculous signs and wonders that proved the truth of their messages. For instance, Daniel 4:2, 3 indicates that King Nebuchadnezzar's dreams were signs and wonders, as were his insanity and subsequent restoration. His dreams confirmed God's prophecy regarding Nebuchadnezzar's future. And his insanity proved that God was the source of Nebuchadnezzar's success. Daniel's rescue from the lions is also called a sign and wonder in Daniel 6:27, because it validated his prophetic ministry.

In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit used "signs and wonders" in a similar way. For example, the Gospels — especially the Gospel of John — call Jesus' miracles "signs" because they verified his message. We see this in Matthew 12:39; Luke 11:29; and John 2:11, 23, 3:2, 4:54, and many other places throughout the book.

John's gospel often refers to Jesus' miracles as "signs" to show us that they are not merely bursts of power, not merely meant to cause wonder and awe... Both of those are used in John and in the other gospels to describe Jesus' signs and wonders and acts of power. But John focuses on signs because he knows that these miracles point beyond themselves. The turning of the water into wine points beyond simply the provision at a wedding feast to spare embarrassment for those who should have stocked more wine. It's really a signal that the messianic feast prophesied in Isaiah 25 is beginning. Or very obviously, the feeding of the five thousand, as Jesus multiplies the bread, leads Jesus right into a lengthy discourse in which he shows that the bread that we eat and ingest in our bodies feeds us only

briefly, but the Father is giving true, life-giving, *eternal* life-giving bread from heaven and that Jesus himself is that bread of life. Or again, the resurrection of Lazarus. Lazarus is raised from the dead, physically restored to life in this world, but Jesus says to Martha, really what this sign is pointing to is that Jesus himself is the resurrection and the life. And earlier in John's gospel, John 5, Jesus speaks of the present day being the day when people hear the voice of the Son of God; dead people come to life. That's the Spirit's life-giving power in bringing people to faith and life in God through the gospel, and the day will come when all who are in the graves, who are physically dead, will emerge, either to face judgment if they've not believed in the Son, or to enjoy eternal life because the Son gives life.

— Dr. Dennis E. Johnson

Jesus' miracles were signs and wonders that testified to the truth of his person and his message. Of course, as God himself, Jesus could have performed any miracles he wanted. But he didn't do that. Instead, even Jesus relied on the Holy Spirit for his miracles. And he did this so that his gospel would be confirmed by the testimony of the Holy Spirit. This is clear in passages like Matthew 12:18, 28; and Luke 4:14, 18. And listen to Peter's words in Acts 2:22:

Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him (Acts 2:22).

Jesus' work was valid testimony because he didn't perform it by his own power. He performed it by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The book of Acts also mentions many other signs and wonders the Holy Spirit used to testify to the gospel. For instance, Acts 2:43, and 5:12, say that the apostles performed many wonders and miraculous signs. And these miracles caused them to be highly regarded even by those outside the church. Further, in Acts 4:30, the church prayed that God would perform signs and wonders through them as a testimony to Jesus. And other episodes in the book of Acts indicate that God answered this prayer positively.

The Holy Spirit uses everything in creation to reveal God to us. And sometimes he even communicates with human beings directly. And that's good news for believers. It means that when we preach the gospel, there's something inside every human being that recognizes the truth of what we're saying. And it means that everything we encounter can teach us something valuable for our relationship with God and with other people. Of course, the most valuable revelation the Spirit has given us is Scripture. And that should be our guide to interpreting every other bit of revelation we encounter. Ultimately, all revelation, rightly interpreted, has the same goal. It proclaims the glory of God, and obligates us to repent and be saved by grace through faith in Christ.

So far in our lesson on the Holy Spirit's work in the world, we've explained his works of creation, providence and revelation. Now let's turn to our last major topic: common grace.

COMMON GRACE

The term “common grace” can encompass a variety of biblical teachings related to the fact that sinful, unsaved human beings can still attain positive human life and culture. Passages like Genesis 3 and Romans 5 teach that when Adam and Eve fell into sin, the entire human race was cursed and enslaved to sin. But unsaved, sinful human beings aren’t as bad as they could be. They aren’t utterly evil and depraved. They help others. They love their children. They create beautiful art. They make true and helpful discoveries in math, medicine, and so on. But how can this happen? Since unredeemed human beings are slaves to sin, why do they still exhibit truthfulness, goodness and beauty? The answer is “common grace.”

Louis Berkhof, who lived 1873–1957, summarized the idea of common grace in his work *Systematic Theology*, part 4, chapter 3, section B, paragraph 2. Listen to what he said there:

When we speak of “common grace,” we have in mind, either: those general operations of the Holy Spirit whereby He, without renewing the heart, exercises such a moral influence on man through His general or special revelation, that sin is restrained, order is maintained in social life, and civil righteousness is promoted; or those general blessings, such as rain and sunshine, food and drink, clothing and shelter, which God imparts to all men indiscriminately where and in what measure it seems good to Him.

Berkhof mentioned two primary types of common grace. First, he mentioned blessings that restrict evil, so that “sin is restrained, order is maintained in social life, and civil righteousness is promoted.” And second, Berkhof listed blessings that meet humanity’s daily needs, such as “rain and sunshine, food and drink, clothing and shelter.”

As with many other theological concepts, different traditions define common grace in different ways. For instance, some define it to include the gift of life itself. Others think it includes the softening of sinners’ hearts so they can respond positively to the gospel. And some traditions don’t use the term at all. They believe that if the work of the Holy Spirit doesn’t ultimately result in our salvation, it can’t properly be called “grace.” Nevertheless, for our purposes in this lesson, we’ll follow Berkhof’s idea of common grace by focusing on the Holy Spirit’s providential work of increasing goodness, and of providing for daily human life.

In line with this approach, our discussion of common grace will focus on two ideas. First, we’ll look at the Holy Spirit’s work of promoting goodness. And second, we’ll address his work of promoting life. Let’s look first at the Spirit’s work of promoting goodness in human beings.

PROMOTING GOODNESS

The Holy Spirit is always present and active. He has always been present and active in the world. One of his tasks, one of his functions in the world is to promote that which is good and to restrain evil. And I think the simplest answer to the question of how he does that and how we know he does that is to say that the world, the fallen world, could be a whole lot worse if it were not for the presence of the Spirit's restraining power in the world, and it would be a whole lot less good than it is if the Spirit were not present and active in this world. Theologians talk about God's special grace and God's common grace, and God's common grace is available to all so that all who live in a world where the Spirit is present experience some of the goodness that comes from him, and also receive the benefits of his restraining of evil. Christians of all traditions would also say one more thing about that, is that we are looking forward to the day when there is no evil to be restrained and when there will be nothing but good in the world that God has created.

— Dr. Glenn R. Kreider

God's primary purpose for humanity is for us to turn the world into his earthly kingdom. This is clear from his creation of humanity in the very first chapter of Scripture. In Genesis 1:26-28, God assigned humanity the task of ruling over creation on his behalf by filling and subduing the earth. This passage is commonly known as the "cultural mandate," because it commands the establishment of human culture and society throughout the world.

This same emphasis on God's kingdom is repeated throughout Scripture. And it finally comes to its fulfillment in the book of Revelation, where God's kingdom fills the whole world. This is mentioned explicitly in Revelation 11:15. And Revelation 21:1–22:5 provides a detailed description of what this kingdom looks like: the entire world serves God, who reigns on earth from his throne in the New Jerusalem.

In line with this goal for creation, the Holy Spirit providentially governs humanity in a way that makes possible the expansion and stability of human culture. For example, he provides civil governments to restrain and punish human evil, as Paul taught in Romans 13:1-7. He provides humanity at large with a common sense of justice and conscience, as Jesus taught in John 16:8-11, and as Paul confirmed in Romans 1:32, and 2 Corinthians 4:2. Of course, sinful human beings often reject the judgments of their God-given consciences. But those consciences still exert an influence toward goodness in human life and society.

The Spirit also provides human beings with sufficient wisdom and intelligence to discern at least some measure of true wisdom. For instance, in 1 Kings 10; and 2 Chronicles 9, the Gentile Queen of Sheba recognized and respected Solomon's wisdom. This implies that the Holy Spirit also granted her sufficient wisdom to recognize Solomon's wisdom when she saw it. And the same can be said of truth in all areas of learning. As James 1:17 implies, all truth is God's truth. And that remains the case even

when unbelievers discover truth. Job's wise young friend Elihu put it this way in Job 32:8:

It is the spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding (Job 32:8).

Here, Elihu indicated that all true knowledge and understanding come from God. And the association of knowledge with our spirits and God's breath implies that the Holy Spirit is the person of the Trinity that imparts this knowledge.

Moreover, the Holy Spirit providentially governs the world in such a way that good behavior tends to produce good results. This is a fundamental point of biblical wisdom literature, like Proverbs. And it holds true for all human societies. For example, disciplining and educating children tends to make them more civil and responsible adults. Treating others with kindness and fairness tends to make them treat you the same way. Gentle answers turn away anger, but harsh words stir up anger — no matter who you are.

Beyond this, the Holy Spirit sometimes promotes goodness by punishing and even killing evildoers. We see this principle in Psalm 75:5-8; and Isaiah 59:15-21. And as we read in Psalm 76:10-12:

Surely your wrath against men brings you praise, and the survivors of your wrath are restrained. Make vows to the Lord your God and fulfill them; let all the neighboring lands bring gifts to the One to be feared. He breaks the spirit of rulers; he is feared by the kings of the earth (Psalm 76:10-12).

As just one example, remember that in Exodus 14, God destroyed the wicked Egyptian army in the Red Sea. This put an end to their persecution of Israel, and greatly hindered their ability to trouble other nations, too.

The Holy Spirit's providential governance of the world is the primary reason sin hasn't driven all human society to self-destruction. He prevents unbelievers from being as evil as they might be, and limits the damage they cause. Moreover, it's his positive influence that creates just governments, friendly relationships, and loving families. And it's his intellectual gifts that allow us to discover helpful truths in all areas of human study and achievement. Simply put, it's the Spirit's divine goodness that enables all creaturely goodness in the world.

Now that we've outlined how common grace includes promoting goodness, let's turn to the Spirit's work of promoting life.

PROMOTING LIFE

As we mentioned earlier in this lesson, when the New Testament speaks of the work of the Father in providence, it generally has in mind the Father's authority over his kingdom. But it's the Holy Spirit that carries out the Father's decrees. One way the Holy Spirit promotes life is by maintaining the world's natural order in such a way that people

can obtain daily necessities like food and water. Paul mentioned God's provision for all human beings in Acts 14:15-17, where he told the unbelievers in Lystra:

The living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them ... has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food (Acts 14:15-17).

The Holy Spirit also promotes life by allowing human beings to bear and raise children. His power over reproduction is mentioned in places like Genesis 20:18, and 29:31; Deuteronomy 28:11, and 30:9; and Psalm 113:9. And it's also apparent in passages that teach that children are a gift from God, such as Genesis 33:5; and Joshua 24:3, 4. As we read in Psalm 127:3:

Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from him (Psalm 127:3).

Beyond this, the Holy Spirit is patient, compassionate and gracious toward all human beings, including those who never come to faith. We see this in Psalm 145:8, 9; Isaiah 26:10; Romans 2:4, 5, and many other places. As just one example, listen to what Jesus said in Luke 6:35:

Love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked (Luke 6:35).

Jesus taught that one way Christians are to be like God is by loving and doing good to our enemies. And this instruction only makes sense if God himself is loving and benevolent toward his enemies — which he is.

God knows who is going to trust in him and be saved and who is not. And yet the Bible is crystal clear, he has what I would call a “creational” kind of love for all persons. That's why, for example, the Bible says God causes the rain to fall on both the just and the unjust. God doesn't cause rain simply to fall on the field of the believing farmer; he causes rain to fall on the fields of both. And so, because God is a loving God and because God made all persons in his image, there is a sense in which he has this type of creational concern and love for all beings. Now, I think he has a specific *fatherly* love for what the Bible calls the “elect,” the redeemed, those that do come to him in repentance and faith. So, there is a particular type of love that God has, but there's also a general type of love that God has as well, and we see that evidence through the ministry of the Spirit in his care for all persons.

— Dr. Danny Akin

Like the Spirit's promotion of goodness in human society and culture, his promotion of life also serves to build the kingdom of God throughout the world. It enables human beings to subdue the earth, to rule over its creatures, and to fill the world with images of God. But in his promotion of life, the Spirit is so gracious that he even grants sinful human beings good things that aren't necessary to the cultural mandate.

Earlier in this section of our lesson, we quoted from Paul's words to the unbelieving city of Lystra in Acts 14, where he told them that God created the world and continually provided it with food. But listen to the last thing Paul told them in Acts 14:17:

[The living God] fills your hearts with joy (Acts 14:17).

As amazing as it might sound, the Holy Spirit is so benevolent and kind that he allows all human beings — including those that hate him — to experience heartfelt joy in their lives.

The Holy Spirit's ministry of common grace is a tremendous reason for us to respect and honor him. It's an expression of kindness, mercy and patience toward those who don't deserve it. It's the ground of all goodness and order in human culture. And it's a compelling reason for unbelievers to stop opposing God, to repent of their sins, and to receive forgiveness in Christ.

CONCLUSION

In this lesson on the Holy Spirit's work in the world, we've explained his work of creation when the universe began, and broadly described his work of providence with respect to nature and humanity. We've also considered his work of revelation by surveying several models that describe it, and by pointing out that the Spirit is the source of all revelation. And we've outlined his work of common grace in terms of promoting goodness and promoting life.

The Holy Spirit's presence in the world has far-reaching results. As we've seen, he's been forming, upholding and governing existence since the first moment of creation. All life, all history, all reality depends on and is an expression of his work. And this should be a great source of confidence and comfort for believers. God himself is present with us at every moment. He provides for us. He protects us. He loves us. And he controls every facet of creation in ways that will ultimately bring the fullness of his kingdom to earth, and the fullness of his blessings to us.

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We Believe in the Holy Spirit

LESSON
TWO

In the World
Faculty Forum



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We Believe in the Holy Spirit

Lesson Two: In the World

Faculty Forum

With

Dr. Danny Akin
Dr. Gregg R. Allison
Dr. P. J. Buys
Dr. David Correa, D.Min.
Dr. Mike Fabarez
Dr. J. Scott Horrell
Dr. Craig S. Keener

Dr. Glenn R. Kreider
Dr. Dan Lacich
Dr. Bruce Little
Pastor Raymond Massaad
Dr. John McKinley
Rev. Dr. Emad A. Mikhail
Dr. Jeffrey J. Niehaus

Dr. Greg Perry
Dr. Mark Saucy
Rev. Canon Alfred Sebahene,
Ph.D.
Dr. Simon Vibert
Dr. Lin Yuan I

Question 1:

What role did the Holy Spirit play during the creation week in Genesis 1?

Dr. Danny Akin

You know, any time we think about creation I think we need to think in Trinitarian category because when you examine the Bible there's clearly a role given to the Father, the Son *and* the Holy Spirit. And you think in particular of Genesis 1: "In the beginning God created..." But then the Scriptures very quickly note the Spirit was hovering over the waters, hovering over the material that would then be shaped and formed into the world in which we live. I often say it like this: I believe God can be viewed as the *author* of creation; the Son can be viewed as the *architect* of creation — Colossians 1 certainly emphasizes that — and then the Holy Spirit is the *administrator*. He's the one that actually gets involved in shaping and molding things, at least that seems to be what Genesis 1 is telling us. So, I think a healthy view of creation is going to involve all members of the triune God, seeing that each one of them has a particular assignment, with Genesis 1 making it clear it is the Spirit who's very much active in shaping and molding and bringing things together.

Dr. J. Scott Horrell

The Spirit's not mentioned much in Genesis 1, other than verse 2, of course, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," and then there was that deep dark emptiness, "and the Spirit of God hovered over the waters." Well, that's about all we're told, really, as then, in verse 3, God speaks and there is light, and God speaks as we go through the different days. And yet, as we look at other places in the Old Testament, we see the Spirit was there as well. Again, Isaiah 40, the stars and all that's created there. One of my favorite verses actually is Psalm 33:6: "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made ... and by the breath" — really, *ruach*, "spirit" — "of his mouth, all their starry hosts." So, here you have both *dabar*, the "word," and the *ruach*, the "spirit," together in creation. So, typically it's seen that, from other verses as well, that the Holy Spirit is the one, in many ways, giving life and beauty to

the universe, but not too much is said in Genesis 1. That is inferred as we see other Scriptures and look back.

Question 2:

How does the Holy Spirit, as a person of the Godhead, interact with God's creation?

Dr. Mark Saucy

As a person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit is the person who is distinct in his application or his point of contact with the creation... But all throughout the Scriptures you see that that is what the Spirit is doing; God touches us by the Spirit. Jesus, when he speaks about the kingdom being present in the Spirit, in his ministry, he uses imagery of the finger of God, and the finger of God, and the hand of God, and the arm of God are all metaphor for the Spirit in touching where God is present, effectively present in the creation.

Dr. P. J. Buys

We read in Genesis 1:2 that the Holy Spirit was hovering over the face of the waters. Now, we need to keep in mind that the word “beginning” ... suggests that it has been selected because of its association with the end. The Bible makes it clear that everything that is happening, the Holy Spirit is involved and included, especially when it becomes clear that everything that has gone wrong with the Fall, that the Holy Spirit will be the perfecter, and that he is the first deposit of God’s great new creation. As the perfecter, he’s moving towards the end, the eschaton. And God has ... superintended the condition of the earth, and preparing the way for the new creation, and the Holy Spirit is deeply involved in that as the perfecter.

Dr. John McKinley

We look for what the Father, Son and Spirit are doing, and we don’t have as much clarity about the Holy Spirit, so we wonder, what is his role, particularly in creation, because there’s a lot said about him touching creation and indwelling people and acting in particular ways. And so, the general principle seems to be that he is the agent of the three that are the Triune God that touches creation. So, any work that God is going to do in creation is the Spirit’s job. So, God speaks to create, but it’s the Spirit who is hovering over the face of the deep. God saves us, but it’s the Spirit who applies that to us. Jesus comes to us and won’t leave us as orphans, but it’s the Spirit who is going to indwell us. And God sanctifies us, but it’s the Spirit who is the one who comes in. So, it seems to be that when God works in creation, it’s the Spirit’s job as the one who carries that out. He is the doer of the works of God and can be spoken of in a generic way in the Old Testament — “The Spirit of God does this and this” — and then the New Testament gives more personality, where he has a masculine pronoun, that is making choices, and he is relating to us, and he is sent on mission by the Father and the Son to come in and work with us. So, in some ways he is the one that we encounter the most among the three. The Father is very much God over us,

the Son is God with us by incarnation, but the Spirit is God in us to work and be nearest to us.

Question 3:

Why does the Holy Spirit provide good things for unbelievers as well as believers?

Dr. Mike Fabarez

Psalm 145 speaks to the fact that God is good to all of his creation, and it works through that particular song, talking about not only us as human beings but the earth itself, the creatures on the earth. God is a good God, and he's good to everyone in some way... God is the sustainer of life. As it says in Job, the idea of the Spirit of God is the agency giving life to all people. And so, in that sense, the Holy Spirit is the agency bringing life and all the things that come with that — enjoyment, just the everyday experiences of good, that James said, "Don't be deceived. All the good things are coming from God through the agency of the Holy Spirit." And in that sense, perhaps, it clarifies a very confusing statement where Paul writes to Timothy and says that God is the Savior of all men, but especially those who believe. That's a reference to the common grace of God. He is in the process of sustaining, and the process of upholding and doing good to all people. And in that sense, he saves them. He saves them from all kinds of bad things. And yet, for us of course, those who are redeemed, those who are his children, he is good to us in a very special way.

Dr. John McKinley

We wonder what God is doing and how he is treating people, depending on a response to him, and clearly he's doing some things that are different for believers compared to unbelievers. But it's also clear that the Holy Spirit is doing good to all, because many people are able to experience love and good things in life. And then we have statements that we categorize as "common grace," where God gives rain to the just and the unjust, and so we should treat people well also. The reason for the Holy Spirit to do these kinds of good things is that he is using them to call people to seek for God, and it is an expression of God's love, and it is unrecognized. I think we should locate common grace as things that God does, and it's the Holy Spirit's role to carry that out, that he is the agent bringing this grace to bear on us. It doesn't save anybody, but it is an expression of God's love that people should thank him for, but they just don't recognize.

Dr. Greg Perry

In the creation account we read that God breathed life into the man that he formed from the dust of the ground. That word, *ruach*, means "spirit" as well, that God's Spirit was breathed into man. And so, what we see from the beginning is that God's Spirit animates every human life. So, it shouldn't surprise us that God's wisdom appears even in human wisdom traditions in every culture. And so, in the book of Proverbs, for example, we have wisdom incorporated, even from Egypt, into the

wisdom of God. Isaiah writes how even the farmer is taught by God in the process of harvesting and threshing his grains to prepare bread. And yet, we learn also that human beings, in our rebellion against God, suppress the truth that is evident — the wisdom of God that's evident in every culture and every person — we push it down because we're in rebellion against God and against God's wisdom. We want to define good and evil on our own terms... So, Jesus explained to his disciples in the Upper Room Discourse in John 16 that he would send a Helper, the Holy Spirit, who would convict the world — unbelievers as well as believers — of sin and of righteousness and of judgment. So, in God's mercy, the Spirit not only animates the created order, and even every human being with the wisdom of God, but even when we suppress God's wisdom the Spirit is there to convict us of God's truth and to invite us, summon us even, back into a relationship with God.

Question 4:

How does the Holy Spirit providentially influence kings, nations and politics?

Dr. P. J. Buys

We must keep in mind that the Holy Spirit controls the minds and hearts of kings and rulers. We read these interesting words in the book of Ezra 6:22:

The Lord ... had turned the heart of the king of Assyria to [the people of Israel], so that he aided them in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel (Ezra 6:22, ESV).

So, in his providence, God the Holy Spirit led the king of Assyria to assist the people of Israel in the restoration of the temple. Same thing in 7:27 where we read,

Blessed be the Lord, the God of our fathers, who put such a thing as this into the heart of the king (Ezra 7:27, ESV).

When the kings of Israel were anointed with oil, it was a sign that the Holy Spirit came on them to lead them to bless God's people. Sometimes God allows evil spirits to rule over the lives of kings and rulers, and sometimes that is part of his discipline over his own people.

Dr. Jeffrey J. Niehaus

There is naturally, in human affairs, the question of authority and where it comes from. Romans 13 makes it very clear that all authority comes from above... There are two issues, of course. There is positional authority and there is anointing which gives authority. And so, let's look at 1 Kings 18, for instance, where Ahab is king. So, he has that positional authority... When Elijah confronts him and starts calling the shots about, you know, "Assemble the prophets of Baal and Asherah, and let's have this contest on Mt. Carmel," you read that chapter; Elijah is calling all the shots. So, he

has the spiritual authority, the anointing... But if you look, then, beyond that into the pagan world even of those days, Isaiah 45 is probably the best example. Isaiah 45:1, the Lord through Isaiah refers to the pagan king Cyrus as my messiah, my *mashiach*, my anointed. And in the Old Testament that only meant one thing: You were anointed by the Spirit. The prophet Samuel anointed Saul with oil, the Spirit came on him. He anointed David with oil, the Spirit came on him. Even in James 5, somebody's sick you anoint them with oil and pray for their healing. Well, the symbolism is the same. You anoint with oil, but you hope the Spirit will come and do some extra work and heal the person. But it's made very clear in Isaiah 45 that this pagan king, Cyrus, has the anointing of the Holy Spirit. That means the Holy Spirit gave him wisdom to conquer Babylon, to administer an empire, also the guidance to return God's people to their homeland. And yet he can say to him, "I've given you all this, but you don't know me"... And so, the point is made that a pagan king, a pagan ruler, can have the anointing of God's Spirit moving him to do things, giving him wisdom. He may not even know God.

Pastor Raymond Massaad (translation)

In the book of Proverbs, it says these wonderful words: "The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will." Wherever God's will is, he turns the kings' hearts. That's why ... in our current day, we should never worry about what happens in politics. We should never worry about plans that are made behind the scenes because we know that God has the upper hand. He can do anything, and he knows every plan, and he manages everything, and everything goes according to his will, despite the evil we see in the world, despite the depravity we see in the world, despite everything we see intruding on the world. Especially these days, we see a lot of things that shock us. Sometimes even believers wonder why God allows these things. But God knows. He has a plan. God has a purpose. We don't know God's plan or purpose, but God is directly involved in everything until the time comes when God will lift his hand in the last days, when God will pour out his judgment on human beings. But right now, God has a mighty hand in people's lives. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit all work together in the world, in the believers, through the leaders, in every human being, in order that his will is done in all the earth.

Question 5:

What role does the Holy Spirit play in revelation?

Dr. Simon Vibert

The Holy Spirit plays a significant role in revelation throughout Scripture. We meet him first in Genesis 1, hovering over the waters, deeply involved in creation. We also, in the New Testament, hear of the Spirit involved in the inspiration of Scripture in 2 Timothy 3:16: "All Scripture is God-breathed" — "God-spirited," out of God's very being; the words of God come by the Spirit of God. And the Holy Spirit, of course, is at work within individual people, opening their blind eyes to grasp that the God who

made this world actually makes himself clearer and supremely known in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. And by the Spirit we come to understand who Jesus is and put our faith in him.

Rev. Dr. Emad A. Mikhail (translation)

The Holy Spirit has a primary role in divine revelation. The Father reveals himself through his Son. The Son is the news; the Son is the message; the Son is, as we see in John 1, the *Logos*. He is, we can say, the *content* of the revelation. But the Holy Spirit is the one who communicates this content to us. If Christ is the Word, there are hints in Scripture that the Holy Spirit is the divine voice who brings the Word to us...

Without the Holy Spirit, it's like a person is talking to us who has the ability to speak, but with no voice, without the power to communicate his message to our ears... The Lord Jesus Christ, in John 3, compares the Holy Spirit to the wind, and he says that we don't know from where the wind comes, but we hear its sound. The Holy Spirit is the sound who gave us inspiration, and he is the sound who communicates to us the knowledge of the Father and the knowledge of the Son. In 1 Corinthians 2 it says,

For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:11, ESV).

The Holy Spirit absolutely knows the Father. That's why he's able to give us inspiration and the knowledge of the Father and the Son. For he searches everything, and has a primary role in the revelation process, which is shared by the Father, and shared by the Son, and also shared by the Holy Spirit.

Dr. Danny Akin

You know, revelation is a gift that God has given us both in the person of his Son Jesus Christ, what we call the Living Word, and then what he has given us in Scripture, which we call the written Word. And in 2 Peter 1:20-21, the Bible's very clear about the role that the Holy Spirit plays in the doctrine of revelation. Of course, 2 Timothy says, "All Scripture is God-breathed." Well, how did God do that? Well, Peter tells us that holy men of God spoke as they were moved, or picked up, or carried along, by the Holy Spirit, which is why I like to say of the Bible, the Bible is the Word of God written in the words of men. These men, though, were guided and superintended in such a way that using their own unique personalities and their individuality, they wrote exactly what God wanted them to write because they were being cared for, they were being guided by the Holy Spirit. And as a result of that, that's why we can have great confidence that what they wrote is exactly what a God of truth wanted us to have. And since he's a God of truth, then there is the natural deduction that the Bible is indeed the very truthful, faithful, reliable, trustworthy word of God.

Question 6:
How did the Holy Spirit interact with human authors to write Scripture?

Dr. Gregg R. Allison

In 2 Peter 1:21, Peter says that:

[Scripture] was [never] produced by the will of man but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21, ESV).

The Holy Spirit was superintending the biblical authors, carrying them along, moving them along, bearing them along. The metaphor is a beautiful one of wind catching a sail of a sailboat and moving it along. In a similar way the Spirit bore along, carried along the biblical authors as they were writing so that they produced God's revelation to us — Scripture. The Spirit acted in such a way, superintending, overseeing the biblical authors, such that they were the ones who actually wrote Scripture, employing their personality, their theological perspectives, their writing styles, their grammar, their expressiveness. The Spirit did not nullify or negate any of that, but worked in them as they were writing so that the Spirit and the biblical authors came together in cooperating to produce God's revelation to us, the Word of God, Scripture.

Dr. Danny Akin

We address the question of how the Spirit of God, or how God himself operates with human authors in producing the Scriptures, I think we have to be honest that there is a sense in which there's a mystery to it. We don't have all the answers that we would like to have in terms of that dynamic. But my good friend David Dockery, who is a president of a wonderful seminary up in Chicago, he likes to use the word "concurative." And I think it's a good word. It has the idea, then, of the Spirit of God coming together with human authors so that the Spirit of God is fully active in the production of Scripture, and the human authors are also fully active in the production of Scripture. And they come together so that, though there are two authors, the result is one book... Or to put it in percentages, how much of the Bible is a divine book? Well, 100%. And how much of the Bible is a human book? Well, 100%. And yet somehow they come together to produce a 100% book that is both fully divine and fully human.

Dr. Glenn R. Kreider

The Spirit's work is always mysterious. Understanding how the Spirit functions in accomplishing what the Spirit does is always mysterious. Jesus describes in John 3 to Nicodemus that you don't know what the Spirit is doing; it's like the wind, you can see its effects, but you don't know what's going on when it happens. I think we have a similar question when we talk about the Spirit's work in the writing of Scriptures. I think it's likely that the biblical writers at times knew that they were recording God's

word. When God speaks and says, “Write this down,” it’s a pretty good indication it’s coming from God. But there are other times that they wrote their words and that the language they use sounds an awful lot like them; it has the marks of the human author. But as my teacher put it, Dr. Ryrie, says that God superintended the process so that what the human authors wrote is what God intended, that somehow, mysteriously, God superintended that process, in a similar way that the Spirit of God came upon Mary so that the child to be born was the Son of God. That’s as much as we know about how that process works. In a very similar way, we don’t know for sure how the process works, but this is what we know: that we confess that the Scripture is God’s word to us, that every word of it is God’s word to us, and that it comes to us not only by means of the Spirit of God in the writing, but it comes to us by means of the Spirit of God in the interpretation, that the Spirit of God who gave us the Scripture is the Spirit, the same Spirit, who helps us to understand, who interprets it, that God who spoke continues to speak through his Word.

Question 7:

What’s the difference between illumination and inspiration?

Dr. Mike Fabarez

Inspiration describes the oversight of God so that the authors wrote down precisely what God intended, as compared to illumination. The doctrine of illumination of the Holy Spirit is the aid that the Spirit of God gives those who read the text of Scripture. According to 1 Corinthians 2, the natural man cannot receive or understand the things of God, certainly not to the point of comprehending them as God intended. So, the doctrine of illumination is the Holy Spirit’s work to open up the minds and eyes of those who read the text, to be able to comprehend exactly what God intended it to mean.

Dr. Simon Vibert

There are two words used in Scripture related to the role of the Holy Spirit. One is illumination and the other is inspiration. Inspiration refers to the fact that the Holy Spirit oversaw the writing of Scripture, moving human beings to write down divinely inspired words. Illumination is what we pray for when we read those words, that God would make them live, that we would appreciate them, that we’d grasp them, that we’d want to obey them. So, inspiration is God’s initial work of making sure that the Bible got written for our benefit, and the Holy Spirit continues to illuminate those who read those very words so that they may grasp them better and live by them.

Rev. Dr. Emad A. Mikhail (translation)

The Holy Spirit has two roles that we can compare. There is the Holy Spirit’s work of inspiration, through which he works in the mind of a writer, either a prophet in the Old Testament or an apostle of the New Testament, to send his word to his audience. This is inspiration. But illumination is different. It means that the Holy Spirit illuminates the believer’s mind while he’s listening to the Word of God. He may also

illuminate the unbeliever's mind who listens to the Word of God and opens his heart to let the meaning of the Word, the meaning of the inspiration, go deeply inside of him. So, illumination is a continuous process that happens with millions of people, while inspiration was a very specific work that happened with the apostles and prophets who were used by God to write the Scriptures. We will not receive inspiration from God, but we all pray that our minds might be illuminated by the work of the Holy Spirit to understand the written word of God to us.

Question 8:

How do illumination and inward leading from the Holy Spirit help us interpret God's revelation to us?

Dr. Simon Vibert

Illumination and inward leading of the Holy Spirit help us interpret God's revelation to us. There are many places in Scripture that we could turn to, to see this demonstrated. Perhaps, most obviously is in 1 Corinthians 2 where we read this:

The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of ... man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way, no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:10-11).

And it's that same Holy Spirit who inspired the written word of God who actually continues to enable us to grasp God's truth through inward illumination and inward promptings. And the work of the Spirit is to make God's written word real, alive and applicable to our own lives, to help us to live in a way that glorifies God today.

Dr. Gregg R. Allison

One of the wonderful works of the Holy Spirit in our lives as Christians is to illumine Scripture, or provide resources for us to be able to interpret and apply the Bible accurately and properly. In 1 Corinthians 2:14-16, Paul talks about a natural person and a spiritual person. In the context, Paul's talking about who can receive and understand the revelation of God. The *natural* person, Paul says, doesn't understand God's revelation. Indeed, the natural person can't understand the things of God because the Spirit is needed to understand this divine revelation. Paul then talks about the *spiritual* person, or the person who is illumined and guided by the Holy Spirit. This spiritual person, the person illumined by the Holy Spirit, can indeed understand and embrace all that God has revealed. So, as we study the Bible, God's revelation to us, we should begin that study — our reading of Scripture, our meditation on Scripture — by praying, asking for the Holy Spirit to illumine our minds and our hearts so that, as we read Scripture, we would rightly understand it and that the Spirit would open our heart so that what we understand, we're ready and willing to obey, to submit to, to trust. So, the Spirit's wonderful work is to help us understand the Word

of God, understand it's meaning, and be ready to apply it as we understand it. This is the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

Question 9:

Why does the Gospel of John often refer to Jesus' miracles as "signs"?

Dr. Dan Lacich

In the Gospel of John, he oftentimes speaks of the miracles that Jesus performs as being "signs." We need to ask ourselves the question, signs of what? And in that culture they understood that signs of the supernatural, of the miraculous, was a sign of a spiritual reality, and John wants us to see that those signs are pointing to Jesus as being, in fact, God in the flesh, God among us, that his supernatural power comes because he is, in fact, the incarnate Christ. And that was a big debate for folks. At one point, the Pharisees try to figure out how can we deal with these signs that Jesus is performing yet not acknowledge that he brings that power from God, because they didn't like that side of it. So, they tried to interpret his power as being actually coming from Satan. Well, Jesus dealt with that very clearly, that Satan's not going to fight against Satan, so Jesus himself was saying, if you don't believe my words, believe the signs, believe the things that I have done to demonstrate that I actually am who I claim to be: I am God come in the flesh; God is among you right now.

Dr. Craig S. Keener

What we call miracles today, the Gospels often refer to as "signs," because a sign points to something. So, yeah, the signs demonstrate God's compassion, but there are also signs as a foretaste of the kingdom. In the Gospel of John in particular, the signs point to Jesus' identity. The entire Gospel of John is framed — John 1:1 and then the end of the prologue, verse 18, and then in 20:28 — the bulk of the Gospel is framed with Jesus' deity. And so, the signs show something about who Jesus is as well as what he does.

Dr. Gregg R. Allison

The Gospel of John rehearses seven miracles of Jesus Christ and calls them "signs." Why *these* seven miracles and why call them signs? John is building his case for the deity of Jesus Christ, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Word who became incarnate, the Savior of the world, and so that we, as we read the Gospel of John, might believe in him and have eternal life. And so, John selects seven miracles, for example, the changing of water into wine at Cana, the raising of Lazarus from the dead, the feeding of the five thousand. He chooses seven of these miracles. He calls them "signs" because they point beyond themselves to the identity of Jesus. He is no other than the Son of God, fully God, the God who has become incarnate, and who is the Savior of the world. If we trust in him we will have eternal life. John is building the case through these seven miracles, these seven signs, so that we might trust Christ and know him eternally.

Question 10: **What is common grace?**

Rev. Canon Alfred Sebahene, Ph.D.

Common grace is God's loving and favorable attitude to human beings. In the Psalms we read, for example, "Your steadfast love, O Lord, extends to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds." Common grace testifies a good will of God towards all humanity, showing itself in the manifold gifts and blessings. Now, to understand common grace, one has to remember that while God's universal goodness is to be celebrated, yet the truth remains that our God is the God of justice as well. It is this God who sets the harmony between his universal goodness and, of course, his justice.

Dr. John McKinley

Theologians have two terms for grace to distinguish the different works of God. One is common grace, and the other is saving grace. And the importance of identifying common grace is something that God does generally that pretty much is available to everybody in some ways or other. Like when the rain comes down, it's for people that belong to God and people that don't, and so he gives rain to the just and the unjust. Common grace is, maybe, the setting for preserving and blessing people and inclining them to seek for God, but it doesn't save anybody; it's for them to look. And then saving grace is where God is reaching to people and converting their heart. Saving grace is done by the Spirit, and I think we should assume that common grace is also done by the Spirit, because he is the one that is working closest in creation, and he is the one that touches our hearts in saving grace. So, it's a preparatory work to do good to creation that oftentimes leads to saving grace where the Holy Spirit works on us, and it can include experiencing love, being able to enjoy art and beauty and have satisfying things in life, eating food, and these are all gifts from God and provided by the Holy Spirit.

Dr. Lin Yuan I (translation)

When our ancestor Adam sinned, man was separated from God, and from then on our understanding of God has gradually slipped away. But because God still loves us, we still receive "common grace." For example, we are all created by God. Every one of us, whether we believe in him or not, is made in his image. So it's very natural for man to retain a certain level of sensitivity towards nature and God... This is [an aspect] of common grace. Through this common grace, a person can almost feel as if God is there, but not completely get to know him. [It's only] when a person encounters special grace that he can return to [truly] knowing God. Through common grace, we can somewhat feel things such as God's existence or God's love. This in turn helps us to share God's love with others. For example, we can all have compassion; we'll help the poor; we'll feel sorry for those who are suffering. These are all God's gifts to our lives. But what's more important about these gifts is [for us] to have God's heart for mankind and to bring people back into his presence. That, in fact, is the work of special revelation and the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

Question 11:**Why do fallen, unsaved human beings still exhibit truthfulness, goodness and beauty?****Dr. David Correa, D.Min. (translation)**

One of the things that sometimes leaves Christians perplexed is how non-Christians can display kindness and beauty and speak truth. Above all, some traditions that believe in the “total depravity” of man, find it difficult to believe that unbelievers can act in love and in truth. But that is what we observe. The fact is non-believers behave in those ways. How can this be the case? Well, we know that God created man in his image, and the fall into sin didn’t eliminate the image of God. In the man, of course, the image of God was corrupted, but not totally lost. Somehow, even though [they are] corrupt, human beings still reflect their Creator. On the one hand, this is what I think explains why unbelievers can act in these ways. It’s the common grace of God that operates over *all* humans, and permits unbelievers to act in a loving way, to tell the truth, etc. We speak of common grace, because we realize that Scripture teaches that this grace of God is a common operation of God in human beings. For example, it restrains the sin of fallen human beings. This means that, thanks to that, the world can still be a habitable place where there is decency, where there is order. Human beings, because of the operation of this grace, do not unleash all their wickedness. On the other hand, because of the common grace of God, we see that human beings are capable of producing good things to bless the community. In other words, by the common operation of the Holy Spirit, we see unbelievers producing artifacts, creating culture and science and art, which still continue to reflect — albeit in a limited way — but still continue to reflect the truth of God. That’s why we can see that unbelievers are capable of loving and serving their fellow man.

Dr. John McKinley

We wonder why people who are rebels, who are set on themselves, sinners, are still able to do good things. They exhibit beauty. They seek truth. They can do a lot of good as it appears. How can they do this if they’re severing themselves from God? And we can explain it some by saying that nobody does good apart from God, and so God is still at work in them, it’s just it’s not acknowledged; it’s not recognized. And we can also say that there is a kind of common grace that is at work, that they are being supported and sustained — probably the work of the Holy Spirit — to desire and do these things. But they’re doing it... It’s not true good because they’re doing it, in a sense, out of bounds or in resistance to God, so it’s somewhat superficial. They’re doing it in spite of themselves, and it’s not something that God regards as something to their credit.

Dr. Glenn R. Kreider

The fundamental reason why unsaved, fallen human beings still demonstrate goodness and beauty is because they are created in the image of God, that every human being without exception is created in God’s image and likeness, which I take is that every human being reveals God, represents him in the world, and functions as

his ruler in the world — representation, revelation and rule. But a second reason, and John Calvin points this out when he tells us that we should respect the truth wherever it's found because the truth always comes from the Spirit of God. And if we reject truth, and by implication, if we would reject goodness and beauty, we would be rejecting the work of the Spirit, even from nonbelievers. In his commentary on the pastoral epistles, Calvin also uses language that sounds an awful lot like, "All truth is God's truth," where he says that truth, wherever it's found, comes from the Spirit of God, and that goodness, beauty, anything that is good, is a result of God's creation of us and the work of the Spirit in this world. The good news is, in a world that is fallen and in a world where things are not the way they're supposed to be, the Spirit of God is still present and active and his activity in the world is demonstrated, I think, in the manifestations of the goodness that could only have come from God.

Question 12:

What are some ways that the Holy Spirit restrains evil and promotes goodness in humanity at large?

Dr. John McKinley

We look at God's work in creation and the role of the Holy Spirit to be involved in daily life, and we wonder, how does he restrain evil and promote good? Because we have to assume that good things are done by God, and the person doing it would be the Holy Spirit, and many evils that could take place don't by the action of God. So, we can guess from examples that are given in the Bible to things that are happening in life, where the Holy Spirit prevents the apostles from going into an area. And that wasn't an evil thing, but it is something where he is forbidding a particular action. So then, you connect that with, Joseph's brothers wanted to murder him, but then they're diverted from doing that. Who did that? How did that happen? Or the multiple times that they sought to kill Jesus, but somehow he escaped. And we don't have to look into human power to do that. We can see that the Holy Spirit is influencing, he is speaking to people's hearts, he is stirring them, provoking them; various unrecognized ways of working where God's purposes are still moving forward. So, broadly speaking, evils that otherwise would happen but don't fit God's purposes are going to be prevented, and evils that still may serve God's purposes, like the cross, he's going to let them go. And then we know from Ephesians 2:10 that all the good things that we do have been prepared beforehand that we would walk in them. So, we can say that all the good things that Christians are doing are motivated by the Spirit and certainly for the nonbeliever as well. So, he is hidden and constantly at work to do all these good things.

Dr. P. J. Buys

In God's common grace he restrains the total outbreak of evil and total destruction of this whole earth, and he stirs up a sense of love and a sense of justice and compassion in the hearts of people, even if they are not specifically his children, and the reason

why he does that is he does it for the sake of his own people, for his church, that they can continue to exist and serve him in this world.

Question 13:

Why does the Holy Spirit nurture and provide for the lives of sinners who will never come to faith?

Dr. John McKinley

When the Bible presents things as so black and white, that God knows everything that's going on with people and he knows who is going to believe and who is not, and he is closely involved, we wonder why he also works for people ... who he knows are never going to believe and, in fact, never do. Why does he nurture their life? Why does the Holy Spirit work and do good things for these people? And we can guess at a couple of reasons why. One reason is that it's a manifestation of God's love. He gives rain to the just and the unjust, and even though they are rebellious, even though they do things that go against God and great evil, he can still say, "But I showed you love. I provided salvation for you, I gave you good things throughout your life," and that is adding further to their judgment and their lack of any excuse for the wrong things that they have done. It also seems, like the parable of the wheat and the weeds, that God has things to do through these people for purposes. So, they might have children that are born; maybe the parents aren't believers but God has people he wants to bring into existence that are believers, and their parents would be. So, sustaining creation where there are going to be a great many weeds in the field for the sake of the wheat, he tells, in the parable, he tells the angels "Don't pull it out, you might pull out the wheat while pulling the weeds, so let them both grow up together." So, I think God is exercising tolerance and patience towards people that he knows are going to hate him and do great evil, because, in spite of them, he's going to do a lot of great good in the creation and through particular lives. We can't trace it all out to see in every case why allowing this person to exist, even though they were going to murder or kidnap or rape somebody, but we can trust that God is good and that he is using his power to bring about an ultimate good plan, and it has some dark spots in it, but the overall thing can be good. And so, our option is then to trust God and see that in the end it's going to be worked out, and in the end there's going to be no evil, that permission of sin is temporary.

Dr. Glenn R. Kreider

The Spirit of God is present and active in God's world. God has created human beings in his image and likeness, which gives them dignity. And God is the source of life, and life is good, and for reasons which are really beyond our ability to know and completely understand, that God is gracious to believers and to nonbelievers, to the elect, to the non-elect, and to the elect who are not yet the elect, and that he mediates goodness and grace and life to them. I am committed to the proposition that life is good and death is bad, and one of God's great gifts, even to nonbelievers, is to give them life and the experience of goodness in the world that God has created.

Question 14:

How should the fact that God gives common grace to unbelievers as well as believers impact the way we evaluate our surrounding culture?

Dr. David Correa, D.Min. (translation)

The fact that God gives common grace to unbelievers should impact the way in which believers view the culture. Traditionally, evangelical Christians have had trouble relating to the culture around them... We see some believers simply trying to be isolated from the culture around them. They don't want to have any contact with the culture because they understand Jesus' command to separate themselves from the world to mean that Christians should separate themselves from the *culture*. When Jesus said, "You are not of the world but are in the world," they believe that Jesus is calling us to a physical separation from the culture around us, not to participate in society, and to just stay within our Christian circle. On to the other extreme, they have gone to the extreme of assimilating the culture in a way that, while trying to be relevant to their culture, they end up just acculturating themselves so much so that there is no difference between the church and the culture around them. Believers must understand that Jesus never commanded us to separate ourselves from the culture. He commanded us to separate ourselves from the *world*. The "world" must be understood as the bad part of the culture without the influence of common grace and the special grace of God.

But when it comes to human culture, we can see that there are good elements and bad elements. The good elements in the culture are precisely because of the common grace of God. By his common grace, God gives blessings to all equally. He makes his sun rise on the good and the bad. By his common grace, God restrains the sin of human beings. And also by his common grace, God even allows nonbelievers to create art and science and develop technology that can be used for the benefit of society. We see in the Scriptures that, for example, in the Old Testament when David was to build the temple, he was willing to use the unmatched ability of some cabinetmakers or woodcarvers that came from pagan lands, like the region of Tyre and Sidon. There was no one like them, it says in Scripture, when it came to woodworking... How are we going to allow pagans to work in the temple of the Lord? But we see that Scripture helps us understand that we must recognize that, by his grace, God allows us to find truth among the heathens. We can find beautiful things that can serve and be used by Christians themselves.

Dr. Bruce Little

Some people have talked about John Calvin in his view when he said that we should accept truth wherever it is found. That led to a more general way of saying it, that "All truth is God's truth"... So, what did he mean by that? Well, if you read his commentary on Titus, also his *Institutes*, in one place in his *Institutes* he says that God the Creator has, in a way, given common grace. And he said, the Spirit of God is the only fountain of truth, and therefore, even though man is fallen, because of common grace, even the fallen man could know truth about the universe. And he said, to despise that truth would be actually offensive to the Spirit of God, which I would

agree with. I think there is a great truth in that, that even though man is fallen, he is not — as [Francis] Schaeffer would say — he's not "a zero"; he can understand things about our world. Scientists have done marvelous things. Unsaved scientists, the medical profession, all the way down the line, we just see people who have not trusted in Christ, and yet, because the world is one way and not another, and because we all live in the same world, why some of these people stumble upon — maybe — they stumble upon truth, and if it comports with the text, the Bible, then we should not despise it. We could even learn something from it... Here's the concern that I have: it's that, when we take that truth, that we don't drag some of the naturalistic thinking along with it. When a man has a toolbox, and he picks out one tool, well, seldom do we just get one tool in this work. We usually get the whole toolbox. So, unless we're very discerning, when we say, yes, that's a truth, we must always make sure that it's a truth that we can substantiate from the text and that we don't let any of the worldview in which that truth was revealed come along with it, because that, I think, would be kind of dangerous. But as a comment as Calvin made that "All truth is God's truth," I think we have to say that is right because Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life." I don't know where else truth would reside if it doesn't reside in God. And if this is his creation, then I would expect no matter who looks at it, if they get it right, they've got truth, and we should not despise it.

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We Believe in the Holy Spirit

LESSON
THREE

IN THE CHURCH



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We Believe in the Holy Spirit

Lesson Three

In the Church

INTRODUCTION

On the last night the Lord Jesus spent with his disciples before his crucifixion, he talked with them about many things. One of his main goals that night was to prepare them for the future — not just for his arrest and death, but also for when he ascended to heaven. And one of the most amazing things he told them was that they would be better off once he was gone. Can you imagine speaking with Jesus face to face, and having him tell you that? It almost sounds ridiculous, doesn't it? That is, until you hear the reason why. You see, once the Lord Jesus was gone, God's Holy Spirit would come to them. The Spirit would enable them to fulfill their roles in the founding of Christ's church. And he would empower the church to build God's kingdom throughout the world.

This is our third lesson in the series *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*. We've entitled this lesson "In the Church," because we'll be focusing on the Holy Spirit's work within the community of God's covenant people.

In a prior lesson, we explored the Holy Spirit's providential work in the world at large. Before the days of Abraham, God dealt with all human beings in the same way. But in this lesson, we'll look at the providential work he does within just a segment of humanity. Beginning with Abraham, God entered into a special relationship with a distinct group of people. And he created a covenant to govern this relationship. From Abraham onward, God has always had a special covenant people. And we call this covenant people "the church."

Most people are familiar with the New Testament church. But although many modern translations don't reflect this, Scripture also refers to ancient Israel — Abraham's descendants — as "the church." The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, uses the Greek term *ekklesia* (ἐκκλησία) to designate the "assembly" or "congregation" of Israel. This is the same word commonly translated "church" in the New Testament. The Septuagint uses this term as a name for Israel in places like Deuteronomy 9:10, and 31:30; Judges 20:2; 1 Kings 8:14; and Psalm 22:22, 25. Even the New Testament refers to national Israel as an *ekklesia* in Acts 7:38. And listen to how Peter described the church in 1 Peter 2:9:

You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God (1 Peter 2:9).

In speaking of the New Testament church, Peter called it by several Old Testament names for the nation of Israel.

As we read in Exodus 19:6, God called Israel, "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." In Deuteronomy 7:6, Israel is referred to as "a people holy to the Lord ... his treasured possession." And in Isaiah 62:12, we read, "Israel will be called the Holy People, the Redeemed of the Lord." When Peter referred to the New Testament church by

Israel's Old Testament names, he indicated that these two groups constitute a single, continuous covenant people.

Some believers have the idea that the church was created in the New Testament, by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit... But the correct concept is that the church is an extension of the Old Testament church. God called Abraham and his people in the Old Testament, and they were the people of the Lord in the Old Testament, the church in the Old Testament. And this same church is extended in our day, and will continue until the second coming of Jesus Christ.

— Dr. Riad Kassis, translation

Of course, there are differences between God's covenant communities in the Old and New Testaments. But their continuity helps us understand the Holy Spirit's work. In both Testaments, and throughout history since then, the Spirit's work among God's covenant people has greatly surpassed his work in the rest of creation. So, in this lesson, when we use the word "church," we'll have both the Old Testament and New Testament covenant communities in mind.

We'll explore the Holy Spirit's work of providence in the church in three parts. First, we'll look at his covenant grace. Second, we'll consider his provision of Scripture. And third, we'll address spiritual gifts. Let's look first at the Holy Spirit's covenant grace.

COVENANT GRACE

In both the Old and the New Testament, Scripture describes God's relationship with his church as a covenant. The word "covenant" is translated from the Hebrew word *berîth* (בְּרִית), and the Greek word *diatheke* (διαθήκη). These are the same words the ancient world used to describe international treaties. In particular, God's covenant relationship with his people resembles ancient treaties between great emperors or suzerains and the vassal kingdoms that served them.

Ancient suzerain-vassal treaties shared three features in common: They expressed the suzerain's benevolence toward his vassal. They defined the loyalty the suzerain required of his vassal. And they explained the consequences that would result from the vassal's loyalty or disloyalty. And these treaties, or covenants, continued throughout the generations, so that the successors of the vassals would continue to serve the successors of the suzerains. In a similar fashion, God's covenants record his benevolence toward his people, explain the loyalty they owe him, and describe the consequences for obedience or disobedience.

In our last lesson, we mentioned that the Holy Spirit's work in the world includes common grace. Common grace is the Spirit's work of promoting goodness and life in all humanity — a type of general benevolence. But God's covenant with the church includes

an even greater measure of benevolence, promoting goodness and life that exceeds common grace. And it includes greater patience, forbearance and mercy than the rest of humanity receives. This is true for everyone in the church, whether or not they have saving faith.

One of the common values or beliefs that we have in our culture today is that God's treats everybody equally. But I think in the New Testament what we see is that God actually treats his covenant people with a greater blessing and a greater amount of grace than he does with the rest of the world. It doesn't mean he doesn't care about everyone. It doesn't mean that his grace is not common in some way to all. But when it comes to his children, I think the stakes get raised a bit. And this shouldn't surprise us. An earthly father can love the other children in the neighborhood, but he'd better be loving and caring for *his own* children in a far greater way than he does for those others. And so, I think we see that same thing in the New Testament, that God pours out on those who are his even greater blessing, a greater sense of love and encouragement and support. And that should only be natural. We should understand that that's what we would want to see in a God who calls himself "Father."

— Dr. Dan Lacich

We'll consider the Spirit's work of covenant grace first by focusing on the church in the Old Testament, and then by looking at the church in the New Testament. Let's begin with the Old Testament expressions of covenant grace.

OLD TESTAMENT

In the days of Abraham, Moses and David, God made covenants that extended special grace to the entire nation of Israel. He first created Israel as a special nation when he called Abraham into a covenant relationship in Genesis 15, 17. This covenant graciously promised that Abraham's descendants would inherit the Promised Land, and that they would rule over all the nations of the earth. As Paul wrote in Romans 4:13:

Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world (Romans 4:13).

Moreover, Abraham received this promise on the basis of God's grace, which Abraham received through faith. As we read in Romans 4:16:

The promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring (Romans 4:16).

And throughout Israel's history, God continued to deal with them graciously. Everyone familiar with the Old Testament knows that the nation of Israel was often unfaithful to God. They grumbled against him. They resented his plans for them. They worshiped other gods. They mistreated their neighbors. In fact, they did all these things even while God was redeeming them from slavery in Egypt! Listen to how Isaiah conceived of God's covenant grace in Isaiah 63:11-14:

[In] the days of Moses ... [he] brought them through the sea ... [He] set his Holy Spirit among them ... sent his glorious arm of power to be at Moses' right hand ... divided the waters before them ... [and] led them through the depths... [T]hey were given rest by the Spirit of the Lord (Isaiah 63:11-14).

God showed covenant grace to Israel when he rescued them from Egypt. He divided the Red Sea for them, destroyed Pharaoh's army, and gave Israel rest in the Promised Land. Despite these blessings, Israel continued to sin against him. But even as they continued to sin, God's Spirit continued to extend covenant mercy and grace to them.

In the Old Testament, God is patient and gracious towards everybody ... but he's especially patient with Israel because he had a covenant with Israel. He said, "I haven't done this for you, O Israel, because you were so righteous, or because you were the greatest of all peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples." He says, "I did this for you because I loved you and because I made a promise to your ancestors." Also, Israel was to be the vehicle through whom God was to reveal himself to the nations. God said to Abraham that he had chosen Abraham so that he would raise his descendants in the right way so that they would follow God's covenant. So, all through, God is patient, but God was especially patient with Israel because of his covenant with them and because God had a purpose to bless all the nations through the seed of Abraham.

— Dr. Craig S. Keener

Nehemiah 9 summarizes Israel's national history from Abraham through the attempted restoration of the kingdom in the fifth century B.C. And throughout this summary, it says that God treated Israel with love and mercy, despite their flagrant rebellion. Listen to just a couple of examples of the Spirit's covenant grace in this chapter. In Nehemiah 9:17-20, we read:

You are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. Therefore you did not desert them, even when they cast for themselves an image of a calf and said, "This is your god, who brought you up out of Egypt," or when they committed awful blasphemies. Because of your great compassion you did not abandon

them in the desert... You gave your good Spirit to instruct them (Nehemiah 9:17-20).

Here, Nehemiah referred to Israel's sin in the days of Moses. The fact that Israel committed these idolatries and blasphemies proves that many Israelites weren't true believers. Even so, they were still in covenant with God, and he still treated them with covenant grace. As Nehemiah emphasized, God sent his Spirit not to punish Israel, but to instruct them.

In the days of David, God graciously established a permanent dynasty in Israel. But the people were so unfaithful that in 930 B.C. God divided the kingdom into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. For the next several hundred years, God continued to express covenant grace by sending prophets to encourage the people to repent. But they didn't. So, he sent Israel into exile in 722 B.C., and Judah into exile in 586 B.C. But even then, he maintained his covenant grace. As we read in Nehemiah 9:30-31:

By your Spirit you admonished them through your prophets. Yet they paid no attention, so you handed them over to the neighboring peoples. But in your great mercy you did not put an end to them or abandon them, for you are a gracious and merciful God (Nehemiah 9:30-31).

The attempted kingdom restoration in Nehemiah's time was another example of God's covenant grace. It ultimately failed because the people continued to be unfaithful. But God's covenant grace stood firm, so that he protected and sustained the nation for the next five centuries, and promised to restore them to faith through his Messiah or Christ. Listen to how Zechariah 12:10 describes this coming salvation:

I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication (Zechariah 12:10, NASB).

Some translations render this "a spirit" rather than "the Spirit." But when the verb "pour out," or *shaphakh* (שָׁפַךְ) in Hebrew, is used with the word "spirit," it generally indicates that God's Spirit is in view. We see similar ideas in Isaiah 32:15, and 44:3; Ezekiel 39:29; and Joel 2:28, 29.

Ancient Israel's history is characterized by failure and hope. God's covenant promises guaranteed Israel's ultimate success. But Israel's near-constant rebellion against God meant that, generation after generation, they fell under the consequences of disobedience. Israel's kingdom was divided in two, and each part was dragged away into exile for its own sin. When their exile ended, their restoration attempts failed because they wouldn't remain faithful to the one that had rescued them. Even so, God's covenant grace remained strong. And in that grace, he eventually sent Jesus to rescue his covenant nation. Some in that nation received him as Messiah and they became the early constituents of the church.

Keeping in mind how the Spirit providentially dealt with the church in the Old Testament, let's turn our attention to his New Testament covenant grace.

NEW TESTAMENT

Just like the church in the Old Testament, the New Testament church contains both believers and unbelievers. And, just as in the Old Testament, the *entire* church community is in covenant with God. This is why the New Testament often addresses the matter of unbelievers in the church. For example, Jesus' parable of the wheat and the weeds, in Matthew 13:24-30, assumes that there will be unbelievers in the church, and it warns that even professing believers might not be saved. In Galatians 5:4, Paul said that those who were trying to be justified by the law had fallen away from grace. First Timothy 1:19, 20 speaks of some that had "shipwrecked their faith" and had been "handed over to Satan." Hebrews 6:4-6 also warns that those who have shared in the Holy Spirit can fall away and be lost. All these ideas are points of continuity between the church in the Old and New Testaments. Listen to how Hebrews 10:26-29 speaks of unbelievers in the church:

If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left ... Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy ... How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? (Hebrews 10:26-29).

There are certainly unbelievers in the church, and they will eventually fall under God's judgment. But prior to this, they receive covenant grace. They have "knowledge of the truth." They're sanctified by "the blood of the covenant." And the "Spirit of grace" ministers to them.

Hopefully, most of the people in our churches are believers. But regardless of our faith, the fact that we're in covenant with God means that the Holy Spirit shows us a measure of covenant grace. This isn't saving grace — that grace is reserved for believers. But it's still grace. It's still unmerited favor from God that improves our lives and presents us with the opportunity to be saved.

Unsaved people do benefit from being in covenant with God... That is to say that they are members of the visible church, to be technical. And the visible church is where God does very much display his character through the preaching of the word, through the presence of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. These people are benefiting by simply being observers of these things, of hearing the Word taught to them. They have the accountability provided by the leaders of the church... Not only that, I would add that in the visible

church, God — in maybe some mysterious ways — protects his people. He guards them from things they might otherwise be exposed to... They're actually, therefore, more accountable to him than they would have been otherwise. They will have more to answer to one day, but in the meantime they have all these amazing privileges, and God, I think, is pursuing them, reaching out to them in all sorts of ways, giving them teaching, giving them the gospel, opportunities to believe and follow after him, and I would definitely say that even though they're unsaved, being in covenant with God is a tremendous blessing.

— Rev. Mike Osborne

Think of it this way: everyone that is part of the church is regularly presented with the gospel and the opportunity to repent and be saved. And we all share in the grace that God grants the church as a whole, such as protection from our enemies, provision of our earthly needs, and forbearance when it comes to earthly punishment for our sins. Consider the example of the early church, in Acts 9:31, which says:

The church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord (Acts 9:31).

The Spirit graciously restrains our sin, and gives us all a measure of peace, strength and encouragement.

Beyond this, the Holy Spirit ministers to everyone in the church through the fellowship or communion of the church. He strengthens and prompts all of its members to love, support and help each other. For instance, covenant grace includes the church sharing material goods and money, as we see in Acts 2:44, and 2 Corinthians 9:13, 14. And it includes the unity and peace we share with each other, as Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:3. And as we'll see throughout the rest of this lesson, it also includes a variety of other gracious ministries of the Spirit.

Having considered the Holy Spirit's providential works of covenant grace in the church, let's turn to his provision of Scripture.

SCRIPTURE

Many human beings have access to Scripture. But it's important to recognize that Scripture wasn't revealed to humanity at large. It was given particularly to God's covenant community — Christ's church. The Holy Spirit chose people from his covenant community as Scripture's divinely inspired human authors. And in both the Old and the New Testaments, they delivered their writings to the church.

In this lesson, we'll focus on just three aspects of Scripture that help us see the Holy Spirit's work in the church. First, we'll talk about the Spirit's inspiration of

Scripture. Second, we'll look at the Spirit's unified message in Scripture. And third, we'll address his covenant purpose for the church in Scripture. Let's start with the Spirit's inspiration.

INSPIRATION

The word “inspire” means “breathe into.” So, when we say that the Holy Spirit inspired human authors, we mean that he breathed his words into them. This is why 2 Timothy 3:16 says:

All Scripture is God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16).

Scholars have different ideas of how the Holy Spirit inspired the writing of Scripture, and of what roles the Holy Spirit and human authors played. But in general, these views fall into three categories.

Most critical interpreters embrace a view we might call “romantic inspiration.” They believe that the Holy Spirit simply motivated the human authors to write, much like an artist might be “inspired” or motivated by a great idea or a beautiful landscape. In this sense, the Holy Spirit didn't actually control or supervise the words of Scripture. So, Scripture was really written only by its human authors.

Many conservative Christians hold to a view we might call “mechanical inspiration.” In this perspective, the Holy Spirit so controlled the human authors that these men had little to no creative input into Scripture. This view is sometimes called “dictation,” since it views the human authors simply as secretaries who wrote down the exact words the Spirit told them.

In contrast with romantic and mechanical inspiration, the Bible promotes a view we might call “organic inspiration.” This view is called “organic” because it appeals to the natural writing process of Scripture's human authors, using their own ideas, words and personalities. So, it's far from mechanical. But it's also distinct from romantic inspiration because it says that the Holy Spirit superintended their writings in ways that ensured they would say what he wanted them to say, and that prevented them from falling into error. Listen to how Peter described inspiration in 2 Peter 1:20-21. He said:

No prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Peter didn't deny the role or even the will of Scripture's human authors. He simply insisted that Scripture originated with the Holy Spirit, and that the Holy Spirit superintended their writing.

In this sense, the Holy Spirit really is the author of Scripture, and not just its motivator. We see similar ideas in passages like 2 Samuel 23:2; Acts 1:16, and 4:25; and Hebrews 3:7. On the other hand, other biblical authors indicated their own personal

involvement in, and contributions to, their writings. Listen to how the gospel writer Luke described his work in Luke 1:3:

Since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account (Luke 1:3).

Luke didn't deny the Holy Spirit's involvement in his writing. He simply made it clear that he wrote according to his own understanding, and that he recorded things he himself had researched. In this sense, Luke and Scripture's other human writers really were *authors*, and not just *secretaries* taking dictation.

The Holy Spirit and the human authors, the authors of Scripture, work together in organic inspiration. As the biblical author is writing, the Holy Spirit is coming alongside and moving, prompting that biblical author to write what we now call the Word of God. So, there was a confluence, a coming together, a writing together of the Spirit who was superintending the writing process and the biblical author, like Moses or Isaiah or Paul, who was the actual *writer* of Scripture, this cooperative effort, so that the Spirit and the biblical authors composed Scripture together.

— Dr. Gregg R. Allison

Now, even though all Scripture was organically inspired, we have to admit that the Spirit worked with human authors in a range of ways. Some parts of the Bible come close to dictation, such as when God told Isaiah what to say in Isaiah 6:9, 10. And Moses said that God himself wrote the Ten Commandments with his own finger, as we read in Exodus 31:18. Still, we have to remember that the books of Scripture are reports of the things God said and did. They are books written by human authors to record these events. We don't have a single book of Scripture that consists entirely of quotations from God.

Other parts of Scripture seem to be closer to romantic inspiration, such as the books of wisdom where the authors considered earthly concerns. For example, Proverbs 30:25-28 reflects on the daily lives of ants, coneys, locusts and lizards. Certainly no one would argue that only the Holy Spirit could grant the knowledge that ants store up food in the summer!

Nevertheless, Scripture demonstrates at least two things: One, the human authors of Scripture weren't just secretaries writing words dictated by the Spirit. And two, regardless of the occasional resemblance to romantic inspiration, the Holy Spirit was always intimately involved in revealing God's word to the church, and in recording it for the church through his inspired human authors.

Having looked at the Holy Spirit's inspiration of Scripture, let's talk about his primary message in the Bible.

MESSAGE

We can describe Scripture's central message in different ways. For one, we might see it as the history of humanity's creation, fall into sin, redemption, and ultimate glorification. Or we might follow a more systematic approach by speaking of humanity's belief in and duty to God. As the Westminster Shorter Catechism's answer 3 says:

The Scriptures principally teach, what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man.

Or we could summarize the Bible's central message as Jesus did in terms of love for God and love for neighbor. In Matthew 22:37-40, Jesus taught:

“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 neighbor as yourself.” All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments (Matthew 22:37-40).

When Jesus said “the Law and the Prophets,” he meant all of the Old Testament Scriptures. So, we could summarize the Old Testament — and by implication, the New Testament as well — using the two greatest commandments.

But when we talk about the Holy Spirit's primary message in Scripture, we have something else in mind — something that incorporates all of these summaries. What modern readers often miss is that these summaries are entirely covenantal. And *this* is the Holy Spirit's foremost message to his church. Scripture is fundamentally a *covenant document*. It reveals God to his covenant people in ways that define and explain our relationship with him. It records his covenant benevolence toward us. It explains the human loyalty he requires from us. And it outlines the consequences of our obedience or disobedience — including our ultimate salvation or condemnation. In one way or another, every passage of Scripture serves these basic covenant functions.

For example, when theologians tell the story of the creation, fall, redemption and glorification of humanity, they typically do so through the various covenant administrations associated with each period. So, if we describe Scripture's message in these terms, we generally consider the covenant administrations of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and Jesus. And each of these administrations teaches us what it means to be in covenant with God.

If we consider the Westminster Shorter Catechism's summary of Scripture's message, we see that it focuses on God himself, including his benevolence, and on the human loyalty he requires — both characteristics of a covenant relationship. And if we choose to summarize the Bible's message as Jesus did in Matthew 22, we can't help but recognize its covenantal nature.

The commandment to love God comes from Deuteronomy 6:5. That chapter presents a tremendous summary of God's covenant relationship with his people. First, it reminds Israel that they are God's covenant people, according to the promises he made to

them. Second, it recalls God's divine benevolence in freeing Israel from slavery in Egypt. Third, it emphasizes the need for human loyalty in obeying all of God's laws with a sincere and loving heart. And fourth, it explains the great blessings his people will receive if they keep his law, and the terrible curses they'll suffer if they rebel against him. So, when we get to Deuteronomy 6:5, we're to understand that the commandment to love God includes all of these ideas.

When we are given the commandment to love God with all our mind, soul and heart, it affects all areas of our lives. In other words, it could have been translated, "Love God with all your being." The Lord who has made a covenant with us has given us a commitment to be faithful, and we, as the other part of the covenant, we have a duty to be faithful to the God who has covenanted with us... In other words, loving God with our minds, with our hearts and with our souls is the response of our faithfulness to God, the response of our loyalty to God. We are telling him, "Lord, we are putting all of our being before you."

— Pastor Ornan Cruz, translation

The commandment to love our neighbors is also fundamentally covenantal. The verse Jesus specifically quoted is Leviticus 19:18. Like Deuteronomy 6, Leviticus 19 emphasizes the covenant relationship between God and Israel. We see this especially in the repeated phrase, "I am the Lord your God." As Israel's God, his covenant extended to the whole community. So, Jesus reinforced loving our neighbors as fellow citizens in God's kingdom. We are to bless one another and avoid things like revenge and abuse because this is what God established as the basis of a covenantal society.

The entire message of Scripture relates to God's covenant. And this is true whether we see it as history, or systematic theology, or as a practical matter of living in fellowship with God and humanity. All Scripture is based on the covenant relationship between God and his people. And the Holy Spirit, in inspired Scripture, repeatedly emphasized this message of God's commitment to his people individually and corporately.

Now that we've examined the Holy Spirit's providential work of Scripture in terms of its inspiration and covenantal message, let's consider its purpose.

PURPOSE

Given that the Holy Spirit's central message in Scripture is covenantal, it follows that the central purpose of Scripture is also covenantal. It's important to keep in mind that because Scripture was inspired by the Holy Spirit, the human authors' purposes always agreed with the Spirit's. And we can confirm that this unified purpose was covenantal by looking at places where they stated it rather directly.

We'll mention four ways the Spirit revealed his covenantal purposes. First, Scripture identifies its authors and original audiences as members of God's covenant community.

Covenant community

The New Testament was written by apostles and prophets who served as God's covenant emissaries. Their job was to hold God's people accountable to his covenant. Beyond this, most of the New Testament letters, as well as the book of Revelation, explicitly name their audiences as churches, often in particular locations. The book of Hebrews is a notable exception, since it never names its audience. But it still includes greetings at the end that indicate it was also written to the church. First John doesn't name its audience specifically, but it indicates in no uncertain terms that the audience is Christian. First and 2 Timothy, Titus, and 2 and 3 John were written explicitly to individuals. But even those show evidence that their authors intended them for the broader church, and their inclusion in the New Testament verifies that inference. Something similar is true of Luke and Acts, which name Theophilus as their initial audience. And the very genre of gospel, as well as comments throughout the books, argues that the church is the original audience of Matthew, Mark and John.

And of course, the Old Testament contains many statements that identify its covenant audience, too. Many prophets specifically identified their audience as Judah or Israel. And even those prophets that spoke to Gentile nations — such as Obadiah, Jonah and Nahum — wrote their books for God's covenant people. Romans 9:4 and various other New Testament passages argue that the Old Testament was written for God's people. And there are many other indications that the Old Testament audience was God's covenant community. Consider Moses' words in Deuteronomy 4:8:

**What other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?
(Deuteronomy 4:8).**

Moses said that possessing the law distinguished Israel from all other nations. Only they had received God's law because only they were God's covenant people. We find this same idea in Exodus 24:1-12. There, Moses said that the Ten Commandments and the Book of the Covenant were specific to Israel's covenant relationship with God.

This covenant audience is also apparent in 2 Kings 22, 23, where King Josiah of Judah renewed Israel's covenant with God. In these chapters, the priest Hilkiah found what he called "the Book of the Law" in the temple archives. Many scholars believe this was the book of Deuteronomy. Apparently, it had been stored and neglected for many years. When he read this book, he realized its covenant implications, and had it sent to King Josiah. And when Josiah read the book, he responded by reading the book to the assembly of Israel — the Old Testament church. He emphasized its covenant purpose by calling it "the Book of the Covenant." And he recommitted himself and his people to keeping its terms. Listen to this account in 2 Kings 23:2-3:

[Josiah] read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant ... The king ... renewed the covenant in the presence of the Lord — to follow the Lord and keep his commands, regulations and decrees with all his heart and all his soul, thus confirming the words of the covenant written in this book. Then all the people pledged themselves to the covenant (2 Kings 23:2-3).

A second group of passages that demonstrate the Spirit's covenant purpose in Scripture are those that were written to show God's divine benevolence.

Divine benevolence

As we've said, God's covenant consists of three basic elements: God's divine benevolence; the human loyalty he requires; and the consequences for obedience and disobedience. When a biblical author mentioned one of these as his purpose, he intended to explain, confirm or emphasize God's covenant with his people.

Listen to how Psalm 102:17-18 speaks of God's divine benevolence:

[The Lord] will respond to the prayer of the destitute; he will not despise their plea. Let this be written for a future generation, that a people not yet created may praise the Lord (Psalm 102:17-18).

The context of Psalm 102 indicates that the speaker was in need of help, and that he looked to God for kindness, mercy and rescue. He recognized God as the great emperor over the world, and asked God to meet his needs. The purpose of his psalm was to tell future generations about how God had rescued him so that they, too, would see God's benevolence and praise him. And this call to recognize God's benevolence was clearly covenantal. We also see God's benevolence in the introduction to Luke's gospel in 1:3-4, where Luke wrote:

It seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught (Luke 1:3-4).

The central message of Luke's gospel tells us that God sent his Son to become incarnate, to die an atoning death on our behalf, to be raised from the dead so that we might live, and to ascend into heaven to reign as our Messiah or Christ. There's no possible greater goodness and kindness than this! So, when Luke wrote to help Theophilus know these truths with certainty, his purpose, at least in part, was to record God's benevolence. And in this, we can see the Spirit's covenant purpose for this book.

In a similar but more direct way, in John 20:30-31, the apostle John also mentioned God's benevolence through Christ as the purpose of his gospel. He wrote:

Jesus did many other miraculous signs ... But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name (John 20:30-31).

In Luke 7 we read about how Jesus was asked by a centurion to heal a servant who was very valuable to him, and with just a word Jesus is able to speak and the servant is healed. And then right after that episode we read of how Jesus comes upon a funeral procession in the village of Nain, and there he finds a widow who is weeping inconsolably over the death of her son, and once again, with just a word, Jesus speaks and this young man is brought back to life... So, it shows who Jesus is, but his miracles also show that the kingdom of God is about restoration, that this servant and this widow's son were restored to their families, they were restored to their role as image bearers, that they could go back to work, that they could go back to the temple and worship God, that they could contribute once again to the flourishing of their community. So, Jesus' miracles show not only who Jesus is, but his great grace and benevolence, the benevolence of restoration.

— Dr. Greg Perry

Jesus' miracles were examples of God's benevolence. He healed the sick and the lame. He fed the hungry. He cured the demon-possessed. He raised the dead. In short, he gave people a foretaste of the blessings of God's earthly kingdom. These acts of benevolence were unmerited, undeserved, and in many cases even unprompted by those who received them. They flowed purely from God's goodness, kindness and mercy.

John's purpose was to showcase God's benevolence, so that we would be drawn to him for salvation through his Son. When we remember that all Scripture was inspired by the Holy Spirit, it's not difficult to see how this passage supports the Spirit's covenant purpose.

The third type of passage demonstrating the Spirit's covenant purpose focuses on human loyalty.

Human loyalty

Many times when biblical authors stated their purposes for writing, they mentioned human loyalty. They didn't just write to inform their readers about history, or to increase their wisdom and happiness. Through the Spirit's inspiration, they wrote to motivate their readers to obey God. As Paul wrote in Romans 1:5:

We received grace and apostleship to call people ... to the obedience that comes from faith (Romans 1:5).

And as he said in 2 Timothy 3:16:

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16).

Every passage in the Bible teaches us how to be faithful, and how to live according to God's requirements. In other words, every passage teaches us about our covenant obligation of human loyalty. This idea is also explicit in Deuteronomy 29:29 which says:

The things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law (Deuteronomy 29:29).

We also see it in these words from 1 John 2:1:

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin (1 John 2:1).

In some places, the instructions are rather specific. For instance, Ezekiel 43:11 was written with the express purpose of ensuring that the future temple would be built according to God's specifications. And in 1 Corinthians 5:11, Paul wrote so that the Corinthian Christians would not associate with those that professed faith in Christ, but lived immorally.

Now, we should stress that the human loyalty God requires from his church isn't mere outward obedience. Throughout Scripture, the Spirit made it clear that true covenant faithfulness is sincere and heartfelt, and motivated by love for God. Consider the words of Deuteronomy 6:1-6:

These are the commands, decrees and laws the Lord your God directed me to teach you to observe ... Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments ... are to be upon your hearts (Deuteronomy 6:1-6).

This passage contains the verse Jesus quoted in Matthew 22:37 — the one he called "the greatest commandment." And it closes with the idea that the law should be written on our hearts.

Loving God isn't simply a matter of emotion, and it's not simply a matter of obedience. It includes both. It is faithfulness and loyalty to God, expressed in heartfelt obedience to his commands. We find similar descriptions of love in places like Deuteronomy 11:13, and 30:1-6; and in Joshua 22:5. And listen to what Jesus said in John 14:15:

If you love me, you will obey what I command (John 14:15).

As the Holy Spirit spoke to his church through his inspired human authors, he never intended love for God to be the only law we should follow. Rather, he intended us to understand the fulfillment of every covenant requirement as an expression of love for God.

God cares a great deal why we are obedient to him, and he really desires that our obedience be to him because we love him. There are only a handful of ways why anyone would be obedient for something. One is a fear of punishment; that we don't want to have the repercussions for disobedience... Another option for us is we'll be obedient because we think if we are, we'll achieve something, we'll gain something, we will earn something... But yet, God doesn't want us to have a sense of having earned his favor on any level, and certainly we can't earn our salvation. So, that leaves us, really, with the motivation of love, that we obey God out of love for him. Jesus makes this point. He says, "If you do love me, you'll obey me. That's why I want you to obey, because you love me." Because when you obey out of love, you're not thinking about yourself. Obedience out of fear is about me. Obedience out of gain is about me. Obedience out of love is about the one I love, it's about my beloved, it's about honoring the one who I am obedient to, or who I am serving or in any way trying to honor. So, when we obey God out of love, it really takes the focus off of us and puts the focus on him and his goodness and his greatness.

— Dr. Dan Lacich

The fourth and final type of passage we'll mention that demonstrates the Spirit's covenant purpose in Scripture emphasizes covenant consequences.

Consequences

As you'll recall, the consequences of being in covenant with God include blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. Many passages of Scripture display the Spirit's covenant purpose by encouraging the church to pursue God's blessings through faithful obedience. For instance, passages like Deuteronomy 6:1-4, teach that the purpose of God's commands was so that God's people would pursue his blessings by their obedience. And Joshua 1:8 says that the book of the Law was written to produce the obedience that leads to prosperity and success. First Kings 2:3, 4 tells us that the purpose of Moses' law includes teaching God's people how to prosper in his blessings, and how to produce the blessing of an everlasting Davidic dynasty. And listen to what Paul wrote about the Old Testament in Romans 15:4:

Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope (Romans 15:4).

Similarly, in John 20:31, John said that he wrote his gospel to lead people into God's covenant blessing of eternal life through Jesus. And in 1 John 5:13, he said that he wrote so that believers could be assured of their eternal life.

Scripture also indicates its purpose of warning against God's curses. Deuteronomy 28:58 teaches that if God's people don't obey the words written in Deuteronomy itself, they'll suffer his curses. Jeremiah 36:6, 7 indicates that Jeremiah's original book of prophecy was intended to produce repentance in God's people so that they would avoid his wrath. And in 1 Corinthians 10:11, 12, Paul again commented on the purpose of the Old Testament, saying that the troubles God's ancient people suffered were written down as warnings to future generations, so that they would avoid the same judgments.

As we've seen, Scripture is highly covenantal. It's the product of the Holy Spirit inspiring and superintending his representatives to deliver his covenant message to his covenant people. And if we're faithful to that message, we'll enjoy his blessings forever.

Now that we've looked at the Holy Spirit's providential work in the church with regard to his covenant grace and his provision of Scripture, we're ready to address our last major topic: the spiritual gifts he grants to his covenant community.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

When we speak of spiritual gifts or "gifts of the Spirit" in systematic theology, we have in mind those:

Manifestations of the Holy Spirit's power that produce or enhance abilities in human beings, especially to benefit the church

Some spiritual gifts resemble natural abilities and talents, so that it's not always obvious who has them and who doesn't. For instance, one person might naturally be a good teacher, but another might only teach well because the Holy Spirit empowers him. Other gifts are spectacular in nature, such as performing what can only be supernaturally explained, so it's obvious these are spiritual gifts and not just natural abilities. But in all cases, a gift of the Spirit entails the Holy Spirit working through an individual to accomplish a powerful work of providence.

Our discussion of spiritual gifts will divide into three parts. First, we'll define their purpose. Second, we'll survey their history in Scripture. And third, we'll explore some evangelical approaches to their present use. Let's look first at their purpose.

PURPOSE

When we defined spiritual gifts a moment ago, we said that they “produce or enhance abilities in human beings, especially to benefit the church.” This is an important distinction to make. Spiritual gifts are not provided mainly for the purpose of enhancing an individual’s relationship with God.

It’s certainly true that, as the Spirit works through us, we benefit personally. But if an apparent gift doesn’t benefit the church, then it’s likely that it’s being misused, or that it isn’t a spiritual gift at all. In fact, this is one of Paul’s main points in 1 Corinthians 12–14, where we find Scripture’s most extensive teaching on the gifts of the Spirit. Listen to what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 12:1-7:

Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant... There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good (1 Corinthians 12:1-7).

Paul equated gifts, service, and working because spiritual gifts are works God performs through us in service to the church. They’re “given for the common good,” that is, for the good of the church.

In 1 Corinthians 12:8-31, Paul explained the purpose of spiritual gifts in more detail. He introduced the metaphor of the human body, and explained that each body part depends on and benefits from the others. In the same way, the members of the church are all one body, so we benefit from each other’s gifts. Paul also made the point that the Spirit chooses which gifts to give to each person. Not every person in the church has the same gifts, just as not every part of the human body is the same. So, no one should think that those with more exciting gifts are superior, or that those who lack such gifts are inferior. All of the gifts were given as a means to build up the church. In fact, in verse 26, Paul said that the parts of the church body are so dependent on one another, that when “one part suffers, every part suffers”, and when “one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.”

Then, in 13:1-13, he taught that unless the gifts are used in love for each other, they’re useless. They don’t accomplish their purpose of building up the church, and they certainly don’t benefit the one using them.

The proper use of spiritual gifts, as we know and as the apostle Paul puts it in his letter to the Corinthians is that spiritual gifts are given for the building of the body of Christ — the church. And he himself, Paul, says in 1 Corinthians 13, I will show you the most excellent way, which is love. And then he continues to explain, without love you can do nothing; all the gifts become nothing. So, what that means is love is one important thing that binds all the other spiritual gifts together

**because then the body of Christ can be built out of the spiritual gifts
when love binds them together.**

— Prof. Mumo Kisau

Now, it's sometimes thought that Paul distinguished between gifts that are intended to build up the church, such as prophecy, and gifts that are intended to be used privately, such as tongues, when used as a personal prayer language. As he said in 1 Corinthians 14:12:

Try to excel in gifts that build up the church (1 Corinthians 14:12).

Initially, Paul's words might seem to indicate that some gifts aren't intended to build up the church, and are given only to build up the person that receives them. But in the broader context of this verse, Paul meant that even gifts that have personal applications should also be used publicly to benefit the church.

For instance, in 1 Corinthians 14:22, he said that tongues could rightly be used in the church as a sign for unbelievers. And in verses 27, 28, he added that if anyone spoke in a tongue during a church meeting, that tongue had to be interpreted to be of value to the church.

Now, different theological traditions understand prophecy and tongues in different ways, as they do a number of the gifts. But we should all be able to agree that the primary purpose of all spiritual gifts is to build up the church.

Now that we've defined the purpose of spiritual gifts, let's address their history in Scripture.

HISTORY IN SCRIPTURE

Spiritual gifts first appeared during the days of the Old Testament. Genesis 41 indicates that the Spirit enabled Joseph to interpret dreams. And Daniel 4 says the same thing about Daniel. And of course, the Old Testament mentions many prophets that God appointed and empowered to speak to his people. We can also find examples of Old Testament figures performing miracles and healings, such as curing leprosy and raising the dead. And even though the Old Testament doesn't always mention the Spirit of God in these cases, the New Testament makes it clear that these were spiritual gifts. Passages like Romans 12:6; and 1 Corinthians 12:28, 29, reveal that prophecy and healings and miracles are all gifts of the Spirit.

Beyond this, Exodus mentions in several places that the Holy Spirit gifted craftsmen with extraordinary talents and abilities to enable them to build the tabernacle, and also to teach other craftsmen. In fact, these are the first people in history to whom the Bible explicitly attributes spiritual gifts. Listen to Exodus 35:30-35, where Moses said:

**The Lord has chosen Bezalel ... and he has filled him with the Spirit
of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts ... And**

he has given both him and Oholiab ... the ability to teach others. He has filled them with skill to do all kinds of work as craftsmen, designers, embroiderers ... and weavers — all of them master craftsmen and designers (Exodus 35:30-35).

The Holy Spirit also gifted kings with special talents that enabled them to rule and administer their kingdoms. For instance, King Saul received power from the Holy Spirit to accomplish his work. We see this in 1 Samuel 10:10, and 11:6. And in 1 Samuel 16:13, 14, we learn that when David was anointed to the office of king, God removed Saul's spiritual gifting, and gifted David instead. This is why in Psalm 51:11, after David's sin with Bathsheba, he prayed that God would not remove the Holy Spirit from him. David knew that God had removed this gifting from Saul because Saul had sinned. And David hoped that through his repentance, God would allow him to keep the spiritual gifts he had received.

But despite these examples of Old Testament spiritual gifts, it's important to recognize that these gifts were relatively rare. They were reserved to those whom God had called to special service on his behalf — people like prophets and kings. Even so, the Old Testament looked forward to a day when everyone in God's covenant community would be gifted by the Spirit. In Joel 2:28-29, the prophet Joel wrote:

Afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days (Joel 2:28-29).

When Joel said that these things would happen "afterward," he meant they would occur in "the last days" or in "the end times." At that time, when God brought his heavenly kingdom to earth, his people would widely receive spiritual gifts.

The Spirit's gifts wouldn't just be limited to people like kings and prophets. Instead, God would pour out his Spirit on the whole covenant community. And this is exactly what happened when Jesus inaugurated the kingdom during his earthly ministry.

Distinguishing the gifts of the Holy Spirit between Old Testament times and New Testament times is one of the most difficult questions that arises when it comes to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. I think that perhaps the clearest teaching of the Bible — and it doesn't tell us a lot, but it tells us something; at least it gives us an orientation — is that the Bible speaks about the difference between Old and New Testament gifting of the Holy Spirit in terms that are quantitative. We think about Isaiah 32:15 where the word "*arah*" is used, that the spirit will be *poured out*, talking about the days of the New Testament... Or the better known passage which of course would be Joel 2:28 where it speaks in terms of the Holy Spirit being poured out in the last days, in the days of Messiah, in the days of restoration and renewal, using the verb "*shaphak*." These verbs in Hebrew are quantitative. It means "to pour out in large quantity." And so, I think if we were to distinguish

the Old Testament work of the Holy Spirit from the New Testament work of the Holy Spirit, we'd have to be thinking in terms of there being *more*, that there's more work of Holy Spirit, and that Holy Spirit is distributed more widely because he is poured out in such larger quantity.

— Dr. Richard L. Pratt, Jr.

Acts 2 records that on the day of Pentecost, shortly after Jesus ascended into heaven, the Holy Spirit was poured out on the entire church. What appeared to be “tongues of fire” descended on them and, as a result, they all began to speak in other languages. Then, in Acts 2:16-18, the apostle Peter explicitly declared that this happened in fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy about the last days.

From that day forward, spiritual gifts have been available to everyone in the church. Now, the Bible never attempts to compile a comprehensive list of gifts, and it never says that the only valid gifts are those that have already appeared. Furthermore, there are differences between the lists of gifts in places like Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4. This implies that the lists only provide examples of what the Spirit has done and was doing at the time. They aren’t intended to put boundaries around what the Spirit can do. Moreover, many of the gifts mentioned are general in nature, so that their original manifestations are impossible to determine with any precision. As a result, it’s reasonable to think that the Holy Spirit has the divine freedom to produce or enhance any ability he wants in human beings.

Whether we think that the Holy Spirit can give any gift at all, or that he limits his gifts to those mentioned in Scripture, we should all agree that he grants gifts according to his own purpose and will. They are manifestations of his grace. He’s not obligated to distribute them in any particular way. Paul made this explicit in 1 Corinthians 12:11, where he wrote:

All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines (1 Corinthians 12:11).

And he said something similar in Romans 12:6, writing:

We have different gifts, according to the grace given us (Romans 12:6).

Most theologians interpret the New Testament to teach that the Holy Spirit is committed to giving every believer at least one spiritual gift. This idea seems to be supported not only by Joel 2:28, 29, but also Romans 12:6; Ephesians 4:7; and 1 Corinthians 12:7, 11. But what sometimes surprises Christians is that even unbelievers in the church can receive spiritual gifts. This was certainly true of the prophet Balaam in Numbers 22–24. Balaam tried to curse God’s people but was forced by God to bless them instead. And it’s true in the New Testament church, too. For instance, in Matthew 7:21–23, Jesus spoke of the ultimate destruction of many that had prophesied, cast out demons, and worked miracles in his name. And listen to this warning in Hebrews 6:4–6:

It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance (Hebrews 6:4-6).

Here, the author said that those who fall away may have “tasted the heavenly gift,” “shared in the Holy Spirit,” and “tasted ... the powers of the coming age.” These are references not to salvation, but to experiencing spiritual gifts.

Whether the recipient is a believer or even an unbeliever, the purpose of spiritual gifts is the same. Their highest purpose is to benefit the church. The best use of our spiritual gifts isn’t to enhance our spiritual lives, or to lift us up emotionally, or to distinguish us from others in the church. On the contrary, the Holy Spirit grants us gifts so that we can serve others. And we should serve them with humility, knowing that he’s the only reason we’re able to do what we do.

So far we’ve considered spiritual gifts in terms of their purpose and their history in Scripture. Now let’s turn to the ways Evangelicals have tended to approach their present use.

PRESENT USE

As we’ve mentioned, all Evangelicals tend to believe that the Holy Spirit continues to grant spiritual gifts today. They even tend to agree that he grants them to all believers. But they have varying views regarding the nature of the gifts he currently gives — especially with regard to gifts that are spectacular in some way. Here we have in mind those gifts that are undeniably works of the Spirit because they don’t mirror natural human abilities and talents. For instance, miracles, healing, raising the dead, dreams, speaking in tongues, interpreting tongues, prophesying, and messages of wisdom and knowledge, are all examples of the gifts Evangelicals debate.

In general, evangelical approaches to these spectacular gifts fall along a continuum between the complete cessation of these gifts, and their widespread continuation. On the cessation end of the spectrum, it’s generally argued that the spectacular gifts belonged to an earlier age of history, and that they ended with that earlier age. Some equate that earlier age roughly with the lifetimes of the apostles. They often see this apostolic age as a period of bearing witness to the truth of the claims about Jesus Christ, and establishing the church. This view appeals, in part, to Ephesians 2:20, which says that the church is:

built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:20)

The belief here is that the spectacular gifts were foundational. They pertained only to the period of the apostles and prophets, when the New Testament church was first being established and distinguished from Israel.

In the eyes of many cessationists, these gifts were manifested only for the purpose of validating the gospel and apostolic authority. Once these had been sufficiently validated, the Spirit ceased to give these gifts. Some end this period as early as the death of the last apostle, typically thought to be John, who died at the end of the first century A.D. Others extend this foundational period farther — even to the formal closure of the canon of Scripture in the fourth century A.D.

God does supernatural miracles today. But these miracles and the works of the Holy Spirit today aren't of the same category as that of the apostolic age. The spiritual gifts of the apostolic age ... were for the purpose of establishing the church. They also laid the foundation of the apostolic teachings and were the means God used to reveal himself to humans. Miracles today are of a different, special category, and thus are not means for a new revelation. They don't add a new revelation to that which God has already accomplished in Christ and recorded for us in the Bible... So, the Holy Spirit throughout the ages gave supernatural gifts that had revelatory purposes for establishing the Christian faith, and they ceased by the end of recording the revelation in the Holy Scriptures.

— Rev. Sherif Gendy, translation

On the continuation end of the spectrum, it's generally argued that the spectacular gifts belong to the entire church age, and that they won't end until Jesus returns. Some continuationists hold that, since the New Testament, all believers have had access to all the spectacular gifts. Some believe that the normal Christian experience should include at least the spectacular gift of tongues. And a few even insist that people who don't manifest tongues probably aren't saved. But most simply believe that the Holy Spirit still has the freedom to bestow spectacular gifts where and when he wants to. They insist that he's not bound to withhold these gifts simply because the apostolic age has passed. And they point out that the only passage of Scripture that specifically mentions the end of spectacular gifts places the timing of that end at Christ's return. In 1 Corinthians 13:8-10, Paul wrote:

Where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears (1 Corinthians 13:8-10).

The continuation view tends to argue that “perfection” is either Jesus himself, or our final state of glorification at his return. In either case, prophecy, tongues and knowledge will continue until then.

It's been a matter of debate for some time whether the gifts of the Holy Spirit are present today and particularly the more dramatic ones such as tongues, healing, prophecy, deliverance... The question is

whether those are still there for today. I would like to invite anyone who would like to bring the question, you know, show me the evidence biblically that states those gifts are no longer for today. I mean, they are a part of bigger gift lists and so I think we agree, the gifts of preaching, of administration, of teaching are still for today. And so, why would those gifts be different? Sometimes 1 Corinthians 13 is quoted in this regard, you know that — I've heard this preached — that when the perfect comes, these other things, prophecy and what not, will no longer be. And the claim is, well, the perfect is that perfect Word of God... It's, you know, the real perfection that's coming is the end of the age and the new heavens and earth and our life in it. And so, there's every reason to think then that these gifts continue today.

— Dr. Jeffrey J. Niehaus

Of course, between the ends of the continuum, there are a variety of perspectives that blend elements of cessation and continuation. Some believe that spectacular gifts can continue, but that they're extremely rare throughout history. Others hold that some spectacular gifts continue, but that they've been modified so that they're no longer spectacular. For example, they might say that prophecy is now limited to preaching and teaching, and no longer includes receiving special revelation from God.

But whatever view we hold regarding the spectacular gifts, we need to remember the range of beliefs that are held by Bible-affirming, evangelical Christians. The Spirit has given us the gifts to build up the church. So, we shouldn't allow our view of the gifts to become a reason to tear each other down.

CONCLUSION

In this lesson on the Holy Spirit's work of providence in the church, we've explored three concerns. We've looked at the Spirit's covenant grace in the Old and New Testaments. We've considered his provision of Scripture in terms of its inspiration, message and purpose. And we've addressed spiritual gifts by focusing on their purpose, history in Scripture, and present use.

As we've seen in this lesson, some of the Holy Spirit's greatest works of providence are directed toward Christ's church. We're used to thinking about the ways he blesses believers, and we'll focus on those blessings in our next lesson. But it's important to know that he also shows tremendous grace toward his entire covenant community. For the Holy Spirit, his work on earth is much more than just rescuing individual sinners from the consequences of their sin. It's about building up and equipping God's people, so that we can grow his kingdom throughout the world.

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We Believe in the Holy Spirit

LESSON
THREE

In the Church
Faculty Forum



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We Believe in the Holy Spirit

Lesson Three: In the Church

Faculty Forum

With

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Dr. Uche Anizor
Pastor Ornan Cruz
Dr. Tim Foster
Rev. Sherif Gendy
Dr. J. Scott Horrell
Dr. Alan Hultberg
Dr. Dennis E. Johnson

Dr. Todd M. Johnson
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Rev. Mike Osborne

Dr. John Oswalt
Dr. Greg Perry
Yohanes Praptowarso, Ph.D.
Dr. Richard L. Pratt, Jr.
Dr. Benjamin Quinn
Rev. Vuyani Sindo
Dr. Mark L. Strauss

Question 1:

Why is it important to consider the church's Old Testament background?

Dr. John Oswalt

The Old Testament background of the church is *essential* because the whole concept of God's "called-out people" comes from the Old Testament. It's fascinating that the church fathers never seriously considered the idea that somehow the Christian church is separate from its Old Testament roots. When the "saintly" Marcion proposed that the Old Testament be discarded, it did not take the church very long to declare him a heretic. Fundamentally, I think the point is summed up in Paul's frequent description of "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," who is our Savior. He is indeed Yahweh, and of course that gets masked in English when we say, "Jesus is Lord." Well, to the Jew, they understood what that was saying: "Jesus is Yahweh." So, who is this God who comes in the form of a baby? He is, incredibly, the Old Testament Yahweh. He is the one who comes to satisfy in himself his own justice. If we don't know the Old Testament as a church, we are going to miss God's transcendence, we're going to miss his justice, we're going to miss his holiness, and we're going to reduce God to a little useful God who exists for us. So, it's absolutely essential that the New Testament church be founded upon the truths of the Old Testament.

Dr. Dennis E. Johnson

If we think about a text such as 1 Peter 2, where Peter applies a whole series of titles that were originally given to Israel in the Old Testament, now to the church — "You are royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God" — we see that Peter is teaching a group of churches in a variety of regions, who are predominantly Gentiles, to see themselves as really the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel, and to recognize that that is their identity. That helps us now as we live this side of Jesus' death, resurrection, ascension, and outpouring of the Holy Spirit, to recognize the significance of the very title "church." The Greek term church is "*ekklesia*," and Jesus

introduces it in Matthew 16 and mentions it again in Matthew 18. Really, it seems kind of out of the blue; it doesn't appear elsewhere in the four Gospels. It appears often, of course, in Paul's writings. But Jesus expected his disciples to know what he meant when he spoke of building his church upon the rock. He expected them to read that and to hear that in the light of the Old Testament usage of that same term, which is basically the Greek equivalent to the term of the "assembly" of the Lord, used in text like the text in the books of Moses that describe God coming down on Mount Sinai and Israel called into assembly of the very presence of God. That helps us to see what the church is about. It's not just a gathering of human beings. It's really the people of God assembled in the presence of God... And of course, Paul emphasizes that there is a unity to this people of God from old to new. There are definitely changes that come as a result of the coming of Christ. But Paul emphasizes in Romans 9–11 that theme of one olive tree into which wild olive branches — Gentiles — are now being grafted by faith in Christ: a single olive tree; a single people of God.

Question 2:

Why was God so patient and gracious toward Israel in the Old Testament?

Rev. Sherif Gendy (translation)

God was so patient, merciful and gracious towards Israel in the Old Testament because of the covenant God established with his people, whether the Abrahamic covenant or the Mosaic covenant, through which God committed himself to be the Lord for this people and them to be his people. In the context of this covenant, when the people rebelled against God and broke his commands, the Lord was very merciful towards them because of the covenant. He gave them many chances to repent and return to him. There is a significant incident in Exodus 32 when the people made the golden calf and worshiped it. They said:

These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt! (Exodus 32:4, ESV).

When the wrath of the Lord burned hot, and he decided to consume them, Moses at that time was with the Lord on the mountain. God wanted to destroy the people, but Moses implored the Lord for his people. Moses said to the Lord:

Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, "I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever" (Exodus 32:13, ESV).

Here Moses turned to the covenant, and he reminded the Lord using the covenant he established with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Therefore, the outcome of this prayer is in verse 14:

The Lord relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people (Exodus 32:14, ESV).

The Lord decided to neither consume nor destroy the people because of Moses' prayer, because Moses turned to the steadfast love of the Lord, the Lord's glory among the nations, and reminded the Lord of his covenant.

Dr. Dan Lacich

God's patience and his grace with the people of the Old Testament is an amazing comfort to me. I see that even from the very beginning God is demonstrating his character, his longsuffering, his willingness to endure us for as long as it takes, and that, for me in my own life and I think for anyone living even in the era of the new covenant, we see the foreshadowing of that in the old covenant. God is so patient with the people of Israel. He's even more patient, I believe, with us today because of the blessings of the new covenant. It's part of who he is. It's what he does to love us, to give us the time necessary for the Holy Spirit to work in our lives, to draw us to him, and to make it clear that he is a gracious and loving God. There is certainly a limit to that patience, but God goes way beyond what I think we would ever be able to reasonably imagine that we deserve. And his patience with the old covenant people is a comfort to me even today.

Question 3:

Do unsaved people in the church benefit from being in covenant with God?

Pastor Ornan Cruz (translation)

Inside our churches, there are people who are included in the covenant, but are not saved. The big question is: how do those people benefit from being in the covenant? ... How does God bless them? How do they receive the Word? How do they enjoy Christian fellowship? How do they enjoy good concepts that can guide them for their lives? Perhaps the best way to understand it is looking at the words of the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 7. He is talking about marriage issues related to believers and nonbelievers, and in verse 14 Paul says, "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the woman" or his wife. Here is a good question: does the fact that he is married to his wife make him saved? Paul is not talking about salvation, he is talking about someone who is inside the covenant of the church, but is not saved. And the holiness concept here is saying that he's set apart from the world, even though he's not saved. For a person like that, and many others, they would be inside the covenant of the church, although not within the saved, but they would have many blessings. They would enjoy the special privileges from God of being part of that covenant. So, once

again, they enjoy communion. They enjoy the good advice of the Word of God. They enjoy all the privilege of being together, even if they are not saved.

Dr. Dan Lacich

God's covenant is so amazing and so vast that even people who do not have a relationship with Christ, but are a part of a church family, benefit from that covenant. Paul makes this rather startling statement in 1 Corinthians 7 where he says that the spouse, the unbelieving spouse of a believer, is made holy by their relationship, and even the children of that believer are made holy. Now, we can debate exactly what does it mean that they're made holy, but clearly it's a good thing. There's a benefit there in some way because that unbeliever is connected in a relationship with a believer. God blesses them. God does something more in their life than he does if they're not connected to it at all. So, there is some spiritual benefit there; there's something going on that God is doing for them that they would not receive otherwise. But then, even in a more general sense, being a part of a covenant people, a people who are seeking to follow God and to live a Christ-like life, there's going to be kind of an excess, an overflow of that in the nonbeliever's life. They'll benefit even from the community, from the fellowship, from the love and the service that comes out of that community. And all of that ultimately, I think, is designed to steer someone to God who is the author of that covenant.

Question 4:

What is the inspiration of the Holy Spirit?

Dr. J. Scott Horrell

The inspiration of the Holy Spirit is, in the broad sense, the Spirit guiding the human authors to write precisely what God wanted to communicate, *in words*. So, the theological term is "confluency," that is, you have both the human and yet the divine. And of course that varies; sometimes it's very obvious — the divine — other times the human seems very obvious, even with grammar that's not quite right and other things like that. And yet, very exactly God is using that human author, *superintending* that human author to write in the words of the original manuscript exactly what God wanted to communicate. And so, you have 2 Timothy 3:16, that God inspired, or that the word of God is God-breathed, it's breathed out, "*theopneustos*"... And yet, it is authoritative, it is absolute, it is verbal, it is again this confluency, and it is without error. We can trust it in every way. And so, it is sufficient to judge everything else, whether creeds, whether the magisterium and church tradition, all else, finally comes back to the Bible itself. Does it align rightly with the word of God?

Dr. Uche Anizor

When we speak about the inspiration of Scripture by the Holy Spirit, what we're primarily referring to is that Scripture is a product of divine activity primarily, and so inspiration has to do with the product being produced through the very working of God. Now, this doesn't mean that God in producing Scripture in its various forms and

genres that God is overriding the natural human abilities and capacities and language, etc., of these human authors. But what it does mean is that the primary person moving in the creation of Scripture is God himself. Now, God's moving is not in contradiction to the moving, so to speak, of the human authors, but there is what we would call a "confluence," a coming together of divine and human activity, so that what the very human authors wanted to say, and in fact did say, are the very things that God in fact moved them to want to say, so to speak. This doesn't mean that these writers were robots or that God completely sort of extracted their minds. It just means that God is able to, through the want and desires and language and abilities of humans, to say exactly what he wants to say. And so, the inspiration of Scripture has to do with God as the author of Scripture through human authors, and truly human authors.

Question 5:

What do we mean when we say that the writers of Scripture were inspired by the Holy Spirit?

Dr. Alan Hultberg

When we say that the writers of Scripture were inspired by the Spirit, we mean that God moved in such a way in their minds that, without subverting their individual personalities, without erasing the cultural influences that they had, etc., God ensured that what they wrote was his word, were the very words that he wanted on paper to reveal to mankind who he is and how he acts and what he requires of us. So, when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, he didn't first sit down and pray and say, "Lord, inspire me to write 1 Corinthians," he just wrote a letter to the Corinthians. And yet, in that process, the Spirit was working in the mind of Paul so that 1 Corinthians is not only a letter to a first century church, but is revelation to the people of God.

Rev. Dr. Emad A. Mikhail (translation)

The Bible says about itself that it is inspired. In 2 Timothy 3:16: "All Scripture is breathed out by God"... God breathed out, by his Holy Spirit, into the lives and minds of the apostles and prophets and led them in the writing process. So, the inspiration, or breath, which God used to give us Scripture, came through the Holy Spirit. There is another verse in 2 Peter 1:21 that illustrates this point further. The apostle Peter said,

For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but [holy] men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21, ESV).

The holy men here are the writers who wrote either the Old Testament or the New Testament, and it says, "they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." They were carried along as if the Holy Spirit held them up and led them during the process of inspiration. Indeed, we don't know how the details of this process happened. It was a

miraculous process. We cannot put the details under the microscope to know how the Holy Spirit worked in them. What we know is that he used their backgrounds; he used their cultures; he used their circumstances and the circumstances of their original readers. He prompted them to think and answer questions. However, the writers were prepared by the Holy Spirit; they were prepared for this role and were led in this role, without becoming like typewriters. No, God did not make the apostles and prophets into computers or typewriters. Rather, he used all their gifts, all their culture, and all their ideas, which he himself put in them, and he led them in the process of inspiration in a great, miraculous way that produced this unique book for us.

Dr. Steve McKinion

The real idea of the Spirit inspiring the writers of Scripture is captured by Peter. Peter describes to us the difference between one's own personal experience of events that they see, that they're eyewitnesses of. Peter says that on the Mount of Transfiguration he hears a voice from heaven, but he says that there's a more certain Word, which is available to his readers, and that is the word of Scripture because the writers of Scripture are men who are carried along by the Holy Spirit. And he says that because they're carried along by the Spirit, *inspired* by the Holy Spirit, these writers are not subjecting us to their own interpretations of things that they see or that they experience. In other words, Scripture becomes a genre unto itself because it is inspired by the Holy Spirit. These writers aren't like just typical writers who sit down to record their thoughts or their experiences and aren't just trying to interpret those experiences for us. One person may see an event, interpret it one way, and another person sees an event and interprets it a different way. The writers of Scripture, though, are inspired by the Spirit to ensure that the message they give to us is the very message of God, the proper interpretation of the things that they record. The Gnostic gospels, just as an example, being not inspired by the Spirit, may tell us some of the same events from Jesus' life, but they interpret Jesus as a different person than the Jesus of the canonical Gospels. Because these Gospels are inspired by the Holy Spirit, Jesus is presented to us as the Christ, the Son of the living God, Christ according to the Old Testament. To be inspired by God, then, means to be given the words that the writer is going to give to us, as well as, which of the events from Jesus' life and the sayings from Jesus' life in the Gospels. Or in the Old Testament, which events from God's work among Israel are you going to record? Which kings are you going to tell us about? And in the epistles, what are the ways in which the church is to operate? Paul and Peter and the other writers of the New Testament as well as the writers of the Old Testament aren't just giving to us what their best thoughts are or their best guesses of how we should live as Christians. They instead, being "carried along by the ... Spirit," are giving to us the very word of God.

Question 6:**How did the Holy Spirit and human authors work together in organic inspiration?****Dr. Mark L. Strauss**

By “organic inspiration” theologians mean, it’s a way of describing how God communicates to us. The Bible, we believe, is God’s inspired word, his message to us through human instruments. By “organic inspiration,” they mean that human authors spoke with their own words, with their own vocabulary, with their own personality, addressing context-specific situations. For example, Paul hears of concerns — the church in Philippi — so he thinks about these, he responds. In his humanity, he responds using his words, his language, his personality, his understanding of the situation. Yet, God is working through that. The Holy Spirit is inspiring him, guiding him, giving him the words to say even though they’re coming through his mind, his personality, his own language. So, it’s organic in that sense. Scripture is fully human and fully divine and coming through the human authors, but it is God’s word communicated.

Dr. Craig S. Keener

God can speak directly from a mountain. We see that in Scripture. But the Holy Spirit also can inspire our human faculties. And even when the Holy Spirit was speaking directly to the prophets, sometimes the style would come out differently from one prophet to another. God even has a special nickname for Ezekiel, “Son of man,” for example. So, it didn’t mean that the style couldn’t include the style of the author, that God didn’t work through the human faculties, but it was still God’s product when it came out. God ensured that his message was preserved carefully through these human authors.

Question 7:**Was Scripture primarily written to God’s covenant people?****Dr. Greg Perry**

In Exodus and Deuteronomy, we read how God asked Moses to write down everything that he had given to them in the covenant. These are covenant-making events where God is giving his law to his people. And there’s provision in the law to recopy these documents, and so we read in Joshua how Joshua also was asked to copy down the words of the law. And this retold the story of how God had delivered his people from slavery, from Egypt and how he was making them to be his unique, peculiar people. Now, of course, this mission is repeated in the New Testament when Peter picks up the words from Exodus 19 to say how the church in Asia Minor is also a royal priesthood and a holy nation. And so, throughout Scripture we see that the Bible is given to God’s people primarily, but also for the sake of telling God’s story to the world, as Peter says, that you might tell of the excellencies of his greatness and how you have been brought from darkness into his marvelous light.

Dr. Richard L. Pratt, Jr.

There are lots of people who will try to distinguish between Christians and non-Christians, or the world in general and the special people of God who have been saved by the blood of Jesus, by speaking of those that are inside the box of God's people, or God's special people who are saved as the "covenant community," and then will say that the revelation of God that's given to us in Scripture is for that community and not for the rest of the world... But there's something we have to always keep in mind when we think this way. In a very general sense, every human being is in covenant with God, and therefore, in covenant community with God. After all, the covenants with Adam and Noah were made with all people. So, there's this broad sense, this general sense, in which every single human being, whether they're in the church or not in the church, whether they're in Israel or not in Israel in the days of the Old Testament, they were in covenant with God by virtue of those primeval covenants. So, do these people have responsibility to receive the Scriptures and to obey them? Will God hold them accountable? Well, to whatever degree they have understanding of the Bible, I think the answer is yes. Now, God does hold his special covenant people — in the Old Testament Israel and in the New Testament Israel and the church together in Christ — they are specially responsible to obey the written word of God. But the fact is, is that the whole of the earth, insofar as they understand and know the teachings of the Bible, they are to obey God as well because they are in covenant with God by virtue of Adam and Noah. That's why it's fair to say, as the Westminster Confession does, that all people in all places in all times are responsible to obey the moral law of God summed up in the Ten Commandments. It's because these things are revealed, according to Romans 1 and Psalm 19, these basic principles of God's law are revealed to all people whether they have the Bible itself or not. It's given to them by general revelation... So, we always have to remember that when we talk about the special covenant people of God, whether we're talking about Israel in the Old Testament, or we're talking about Jews and Gentiles together in the church today in Christ, we're talking about people who have a special accountability to the teachings of Scripture. But the whole world is also responsible to obey what they know that the Scriptures teach, to whatever degree God has revealed it to them by general revelation.

Dr. Dan Lacich

Scripture was really written *primarily* to God's covenant people, but that's not the same thing as saying *exclusively*. It has a primary purpose. Even in terms of the original audiences, we would say that it was written *to* them, but it was also written *for* us. So, Paul wrote to the Corinthians; he wrote to Timothy. Moses wrote to the people of Israel, but it was also written for us to gain and benefit from it down the line as a part of God's covenant people. But beyond that, it's still God's Word. It's still truth. There's still a power to it regardless of our relationship to the covenant. So, it also has an application to everyone because it shows us who God is. It shows us our relationship to him and our need for him. So, it was written to a particular audience primarily, but it has a much broader application and is not exclusive by any means.

Question 8:**Why is it important to know that the Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to all believers?****Dr. Dennis E. Johnson**

It's important for us to realize that the Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to all believers to keep us humble and to keep us dependent upon one another. That seems to have been forgotten by the church in Corinth. Paul has to use the "body of Christ" imagery in a very powerful way in 1 Corinthians 12, on the one hand, to rebuke those with high-visibility ministries who may think that they don't need the other members of the body who have very low-visibility spiritual gifts. Paul says, "the eye cannot say to hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor can the head say to the feet, 'I have no need of you.'" We need all the members of the body. By the same token, those who may not have highly-visible spiritual gifts — teaching, leadership — may be tempted to think, I have nothing to contribute to the body. And Paul uses that analogy there too as he talks about a foot who says, "Because I'm not a hand I don't belong to the body at all." And that may tempt us to be reluctant to serve, or passive, only receiving other's service; whereas, if we remember that God gives gifts through the Spirit to all the members of the body, we honor every member of the body, we glorify God for his wisdom in putting every member in just the right place, and we're humbled enough to know how much we need one another.

Dr. Tim Foster

It may surprise some Christians to realize that the Holy Spirit is dispensed very sparingly in the Old Testament. It's given to certain people, typically leaders of Israel, or King David, for a period of time. What happens when we come to Pentecost and the church after Jesus' ascension and the gift of the Spirit is what we might call the "democratization" of the Spirit, the gift of the Spirit to all believers. That's important for a number of reasons. Firstly, it's important because God made a promise in Joel 2 that in the last days, that is, when God's purposes had come to a fulfillment, when God's kingdom had come, a sign of that would be the gift of the Spirit on all people. And that's exactly the passage that Peter quotes at Pentecost in Acts 2. So, it's important because it's a gift and sign of the new covenant. Secondly, it's important because the Holy Spirit is given to empower us for mission, and so that's why the apostles were told to wait in Jerusalem until the gift of the Spirit came, and when the gift of the Spirit came, they were sent out into mission. So, the importance of the Spirit is that all believers have the Spirit, it is the last days, the kingdom of God has come, but with that is the impetus and the command and the power to mission.

Prof. Mumo Kisau

It is the Holy Spirit who gives the gifts to all believers, and it's so important for us to know that it is the Holy Spirit who is the provider, who is the giver. And as a giver, he gives to anyone and to everyone according to his will and purpose, so that we have nothing to brag about. If you are a good preacher, you are a good preacher because it

is a gift of the Holy Spirit, and therefore, it is not of us. Therefore, we would not be able to boast about whatever it is that we do in the church because it's a gift, as a free gift. We don't have to even begin to ask for it. I know that some people would want to say, "Oh, give me this gift or that gift." If your father or your mother goes to the market and brings you a gift, you don't solicit over it. It is he or she who decided what to bring to you. The same way the Holy Spirit is the provider, is the giver of all the spiritual gifts to the church.

Question 9:

What is the primary purpose of spiritual gifts?

Dr. Gregg R. Allison

The primary purpose of spiritual gifts is to build up the body of Christ, to edify the church and make it fully mature in Jesus Christ. And so, Christ, in ascending on high gave gifts to his people. The Holy Spirit distributes these gifts to each member of the church, so that as each member uses his or her gift or gifts, the church builds itself up in love and becomes all that Christ means for it to be. So, to each believer, to each member of the church, the Spirit gives a gift or gifts — leading, or teaching, or faith, or from a continuationist's position, prophecy, speaking in tongues — the Spirit is the one who sovereignly gives these gifts. We recognize the gift or gifts that the Spirit has given to us. We should be ready to use those gifts and engage in ministry using those gifts, and as we do, the church grows, the church expands, the church is built up to become all that Jesus Christ means for it to be.

Dr. Greg Perry

Both Peter and Paul agree that the primary purpose of spiritual gifts is to build up the body of Christ, both in size and in spiritual maturity. Peter writes in 1 Peter 4 that if you have gifts, use them to serve one another, whether gifts of speaking, speak as speaking from God, or gifts of service, serve as ones who have been supplied with strength by God. And whether writing to the Romans or to the Corinthians or to the Ephesians, Paul describes these gifts as tangible expressions of grace where each member is given different gifts so that we might depend on each other. So, it's an expression, a very unusual expression, of social interdependency between Jew and Greek, between male and female, between slave and free. Paul was going right against the stoic ideal of self-sufficiency. And we struggle with that in the West today and this idea of rugged individualism. So, spiritual gifts are given and distributed to different members of the body of Christ in order that we might serve one another and then together serve Christ's mission in the world.

Dr. Craig S. Keener

When Paul is dealing with an abuse of spiritual gifts in Corinth, in chapters 12–14 of 1 Corinthians, Paul emphasizes the primary purpose of spiritual gifts is to build up the body of Christ. He emphasizes that in chapter 12, elaborating about the body. He emphasizes that in chapter 14 showing how some particular gifts are more edifying to

the body in general than are others. And smack-dab in between them he has chapter 13, a chapter about love, where he starts off by saying that if I have all the gifts, but I don't have love, I'm nothing. And then at the end of the chapter he says, "Well, the gifts will some day pass away, but love will be forever." And right in the middle he has this definition of love, he lists characteristics of love, which, if you've read the rest of the letter, contrasts precisely with the behavior of the Corinthians. So, spiritual gifts are good, and God's gifts *are* good, but it's because of love that we know how to use those gifts for the purpose for which God gave them to us — to build up the body of Christ.

Question 10:

What role should spiritual gifts play in the life of the church?

Dr. Dennis E. Johnson

The various gifts that the Holy Spirit gives have an important role in the life of the church. Fundamentally, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12, their purpose is to enable each one of us as members of the body of Christ to build up the whole body for the common good. So, the Spirit's mission in giving us gifts is really to glorify Christ and to cause us to grow in maturity. And you see that not only in 1 Corinthians 12, but also when Paul talks about some specific spiritual gifts for teaching in Ephesians 4, where he says apostles and prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers are all given to equip the saints for works of ministry so that each member of the body of Christ can contribute as we serve together to the building up of the body in maturity, in truth and in love.

Rev. Vuyani Sindo

What role should spiritual gifts play in the life of the church? This can be one of those divisive questions. So, for example, you can find certain churches emphasizing one spiritual gift over other spiritual gifts. But it is important to bear in mind that in 1 Corinthians 12:7, for example, we are told that:

**To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good
(1 Corinthians 12:7, ESV).**

So, the spiritual gifts were given by God to the church for the common good that all believers might serve him and that they might serve one another within the church, and they are brought together as a body. And therefore, that will mean that there is no spiritual gift that's inferior to the other, but all spiritual gifts are equally important in the kingdom of God for building the church and for helping us to serve God better together.

Question 11:**How can we discover our spiritual gifts?****Dr. David W. Jones**

Spiritual gifts are such an important part of the Christian life. I think it's again natural to ask, what's my spiritual gift? As we read in Scripture, we all have them, but how do we know them? How can we use them? I think a few things come to mind. It's certainly helpful to ask others in our Christian circles if they can identify and see spiritual gifts in us and perhaps give some direction. I think, secondly, it's helpful to just try various areas. If you think you might have the gift of service, well, try serving. If you think you might have the gift of teaching you seek out a venue to teach, and so forth. And I think if that gift is really present within us, by the Spirit, there'll be a degree of success and blessing, and certainly ministerial furtherance as we use those gifts. Maybe thirdly, there's just, I think, an inner kind of confirmation that comes once we hit upon that gift, kind of like Jeremiah saying he has fire in his bones. I think of a friend of mine who has the gift of giving, and God has blessed him tremendously with the ability to make money in the realm of business. And I asked him one day, "Why do you give so much?" He said, "Really, you know, I can't *not* do it because of that spiritual pleasure that I receive as I do give. It's just like it feels like I'm singing the song that I was made to sing." So, I think those three things: advice from others, trial and error, and then maybe sort of an inner almost subjective personal blessing or confirmation as we do find that "right" gift that we have.

Yohanes Praptowarso, Ph.D. (translation)

In 1 Corinthians 12:7, a spiritual gift or other gifts are given by the Lord to those who are members of Christ's body for the mutual needs of that body of Christ. And we find [our spiritual gifts] when we try them out. And if we continue trying them, and we begin to try whatever ministries that exist around us, then we begin to be comfortable doing them, we enjoy doing them, we are happy doing them, and then we produce fruits from our work, from what we do. And people around us are blessed by our work, and we are happy. We also feel blessed to do them. That means we have found our spiritual gifts, similar to how we discover our physical talents.

Question 12:**What is the proper use and emphasis of spiritual gifts?****Dr. Uche Anizor**

To understand the proper emphasis on spiritual gifts, we need to turn to Paul. So, Paul in 1 Corinthians, his main point there was that spiritual gifts are for the up-building of unity in the body of Christ. So, as much as there is a diversity of gifts, there's the overarching aim of building unity in the church. And so, Paul will build on that in a book like Ephesians where Paul says the ultimate goal of these spiritual gifts is the building up the body of Christ to a mature man, but also to unity. And so, as we think about what's the proper emphasis, the proper emphasis isn't sort of finding self-

fulfillment or operating in our strongest gifts. That isn't the proper emphasis; while those things are good they're not the proper emphasis. The emphasis that Paul gives us is that we are to aim at service for the up-building of the church. And so, when you look at the catalogue of gifts in 1 Corinthians 12, for instance, what you see is Paul saying, all these things are meant for one purpose, one purpose: to build up the body of Christ. And even when Paul says at the end of chapter 12, "desire the greater gifts," what his emphasis there is, is not that certain gifts are just so much better — so speaking in tongues is better than teaching or something along those lines — his point is, desire those gifts that will maximally build up the body of Christ, that will maximally build up the body of Christ in terms of unity, that will maximally build up the body of Christ in terms of spiritual and theological maturity. And so, I think that's what we need to sort of emphasize when we talk about the use of spiritual gifts in the church.

Dr. Benjamin Quinn

So, with respect to proper use and emphasis of spiritual gifts, first of all, I think we should recognize the diversity of gifts within the body of Christ. So, if we can understand and agree together that everyone is gifted in some way by the Spirit to serve him, to serve his church, to serve God's world as a whole, then there's a great diversity there. I personally don't see the gifts in the New Testament that Paul lists, especially, as being exhaustive. I think there may be more than that. But this gets directly to the question of the use and emphasis of these things. In terms of the use of these things, I want to say two things immediately. One is that they're not limited to the local church itself, certainly not to undermine the use of them in the local church with respect to the gift of love, or compassion, or administration, or mercy, or whatever the case may be. There's so much opportunity within the body of Christ when it comes to our fellowship and love together and service together to employ those gifts. But those gifts also must, I think, be flexed outside the church as well, and those are done through our various vocations. When I say "vocations," I mean the places where we work, but beyond that: our neighborhoods, our family lives, those places where we're called to live and to be and to do. So, spiritual gifts seem to be flexed in those directions as well. In terms of the proper use and emphasis of these things, again, there's so much diversity there it's hard to be specific, but one thing that I think we must always keep in front of us is that any exercise of a spiritual gift that we can't draw straight lines to the love of God and the love of other people is probably is misuse of that gift. So, regardless of where this gift is being flexed, whether inside the church or outside the church, or whether it's in your family life, in your parenting strategies, in your business practices, in whatever that you're doing, if you're flexing a gift that the Spirit has actually given you and you can't draw straight lines between what you're doing, how you're exercising that gift, and the love of God and love of other people, we should probably back up and reconsider.

Question 13:**Can the Spirit give spiritual gifts that are not in the lists of gifts found in Scripture?****Dr. Craig S. Keener**

The Holy Spirit is free to bestow gifts that aren't specifically mentioned in Scripture, I would say because, you know, if you look at Paul's lists of gifts — Romans 12 includes things like prophesying but also giving and so on. First Corinthians 12, and actually 12–14, includes about three different lists of gifts. Sometimes we only look at the one in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, but you've also got 12:28, 29. You've also got 14:26 and so forth. Then you have Ephesians 4:11, and that one's a little bit different. But when you compare the different lists of gifts, it looks like these are kind of random lists, that the point is that God just has different members of the body, he creates us, he gifts us in different ways, and each of us is a blessing, each of us is important and we need to work together for the up-building of the body. The point isn't so much on making a particular list definitive.

Rev. Mike Osborne

A spiritual gift is something that God gives to all of his people. I believe that every single Christian has at least one and that the lists of gifts in the New Testament are just examples. There are many, many more than are listed in the New Testament. But what they all have in common is that they are used and exercised for the benefit of others to advance the gospel and ultimately, of course, to glorify God.

Dr. Dan Lacich

In Scripture there are a number of gifts of the Holy Spirit that are listed, and certainly that can raise the question, is that all of them or are there possibly more gifts that are never mentioned in Scripture? And there's part of me that wants to say, well, who am I to tell the Holy Spirit, "No, you can't give any more gifts unless they're on that list?" But I think when we look at even how those gifts are listed and the places they're listed, none of them are complete in and of themselves. There's no two identical gifts. There's some crossover, there is some overlap, but what Paul says to the Romans or to the Corinthians or what Peter says, they're all different. So, it would be possible that the Corinthians would look at their list and say, "Oh, this is it. This is all there are." And the Romans would say, "Oh no, no, no, there's others." And I think also, as we look at how the Holy Spirit operates within the New Testament, within Scripture as a whole, there are lots of things that we're told that God does that Scripture doesn't get specific about. We're told of other prophets that prophesied, but we don't know what they prophesied. But we know they did, and we know it was from God. So, I think we need to allow God to have the free rein, if you will, that if the Holy Spirit so desires to give gifts that aren't particularly in a list, that that's absolutely acceptable.

Question 14:

Do you believe that the miraculous spiritual gifts have ceased or that they continue today?

Dr. Gregg R. Allison

Have the miraculous spiritual gifts ceased today? There are two positions to this issue. The cessationist position believes that these miraculous supernatural gifts have indeed ceased; that is, the Holy Spirit is no longer distributing gifts like prophecy, speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, word of knowledge, word of wisdom, healings and miracles. Cessationists do not affirm that God can't heal or can't perform the miraculous, but the position does affirm that God does not heal, does not perform the miraculous through people who possess these supernatural miraculous gifts. A key support for this position is that the purpose of spiritual gifts, particularly these miraculous gifts, was to confirm the message of the gospel and the *messengers* of the gospel, that is, the apostles. Once the gospel and the gospel messengers were confirmed by these miraculous gifts, the Holy Spirit ceased distributing them in the church. The continuationist position affirms that the Holy Spirit continues to distribute these miraculous gifts, the gifts of prophecy, speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, word of knowledge, word of wisdom, healings and miracles. He continues to distribute these gifts today, so they continue in the church. A key support for this position is that the primary purpose for spiritual gifts is to build up the body of Christ, to edify the church so it becomes fully mature, and since the church has not completed its pathway towards maturity, all spiritual gifts, including the miraculous gifts, are needed today, and the Spirit continues to distribute them to the church.

Rev. Sherif Gendy (translation)

The supernatural spiritual gifts ceased by the end of the apostolic age in the early church. We know this because Paul tells us clearly in Ephesians 2:20:

built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20, ESV)

Paul says that there is an apostolic age, the age of establishing the foundation for the church, upon which we are built today. So, we do not establish the church, but we are built upon this foundation that was laid by the apostles, prophets, and Christ himself. Therefore, the spiritual gifts were tied to the era of establishing the church with regards to the apostolic teachings. Also, the spiritual gifts are related to revelation, God's revelation about himself. Because of their revelatory nature, they are instruments God used to reveal himself. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews says these words in Hebrews 1:1-2:

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son (Hebrews 1:1-2, ESV).

God spoke long ago to our fathers through the prophets in dreams and visions and in many ways. But in the last days, he has spoken to us by Christ, by his Son. Christ became the divine incarnation to the revelation, and subsequently, because he is the Word of God, God has spoken to us in the last days in Christ, and by the completion of recording this revelation in Scripture, the revelation has stopped. God does not reveal himself to us in a new revelation, because the revelation was completed by the incarnation of Christ in his person and in his work. Therefore, the supernatural, miraculous spiritual gifts, because they were linked to the revelation, had ceased by the end of recording the revelation in Scripture. We understand that this does not mean that God doesn't do miracles today or that the Holy Spirit is not working today. On the contrary, God emphasizes the importance of praying for the sick because the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick... Another point I would like to make is that the Holy Spirit has a continuous work, as he renews people and transforms sinners and regenerates them. And this is a very great miracle that the Holy Spirit does every day in the life of sinners. So, I can't say that miracles have ceased. Miracles still exist; the Holy Spirit still works. But the miraculous gifts exclusively were for the apostolic age.

Dr. Craig S. Keener

Some people have argued that certain spiritual gifts and miraculous happenings aren't for today. But, you know, when Paul lists gifts he doesn't distinguish, you know, here are "super gifts" and here are other kinds of gifts. He doesn't distinguish natural and supernatural. That wasn't the kind of distinction somebody would have made in the first century in any case. So, we need all the gifts. We need all the members of the body of Christ. If you're amputating certain members, or maybe some other churches like to collect all the amputated members, but, you know, it's still not a whole body. So, what we see in 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 is that gifts like prophecy and tongues *and knowledge* — again, that's what we don't always consider a supernatural gift, but in the context of 1 Corinthians it probably has to do with the gift of teaching — but that these things will pass away when we have full knowledge, in the context, when we see him face to face. So, at Jesus' return then we won't need those gifts because we'll have something so much better. But there's no indication that such gifts will pass away before that time... There's no mention that the gifts like that would stop. It's actually the teaching that they would stop that's postbiblical, not the idea that it would continue. And so, if the concern is, well, we can't have postbiblical gifts like prophecy because they might compete with the Canon, they didn't compete with the Canon while the Canon was being written. Obviously not all prophecies were recorded in Scripture because we have like hundreds of thousands probably in the first century if we can believe Paul that in a regular house church in 1 Corinthians 14 you've got maybe two or three people prophesying per week, and all these per year; you add up the years for all the house churches in the Roman Empire, that would be a lot of prophesying. But it didn't compete with the Canon. It never was meant to have that function. So, to say that those things would have ceased because it would compete with Scripture, I mean, teaching might run the risk of competing with Scripture too, but it doesn't. You have false prophecy; you have false teaching, things

that contradict Scripture. In those cases we need to use discernment and see which is which. But you also have, because there's the possibility of false teaching... You know, I've experienced some of these spiritual gifts. I believe in them, but sometimes I've been tempted to believe that they ceased just because it would make it so much simpler, you wouldn't have to use discernment. But that's not the solution that Scripture gives us. Scripture says that we need to discern the right from the wrong. That's true of prophecy. That's true of teaching as well.

Dr. Todd M. Johnson

There are two reasons that we should believe that miracles continue within Christianity today. One of them is if we look back at Christian history there's evidence well after the apostles that there were miraculous events taking place practically all over the world, from the Irish islands all the way into central Asia on the Silk Road. There's one terrific story after another of God's miraculous provision. So, we see it in Christian history. Now that Christianity is spread all over the world today, the second way in which we see it is that Christians around the world are reporting miraculous events in their own lives, miraculous healings, visitations of angels, and all sorts of other stories that we read about in the New Testament, and perhaps should not be surprised to see all around the world today. So, there's a continuity throughout all of Christian history, and there's a continuity as we look at what's happening all around the world in Christianity today.

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We Believe in the Holy Spirit

LESSON
FOUR

IN THE BELIEVER



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We Believe in the Holy Spirit

Lesson Four

In the Believer

INTRODUCTION

In the days of ancient Israel's kingdom, King David created the plans to build God's temple. He even collected many of the materials necessary to build and adorn the temple, especially its precious metals and jewels. But the actual building of the temple was left to David's son Solomon. And once Solomon had completed the temple, the glory of the Lord filled it, and the Lord caused his name to dwell there perpetually.

God's work in the life of believers is a bit like this. God the Father planned our salvation. His son the Lord Jesus accomplished the work necessary to save us. And the Holy Spirit fills and dwells in us, ensuring that the Father's plans and the Son's work are manifested in our lives forever. In fact, in Paul's first letter to the churches in Corinth, the apostle directly compared believers to the temple specifically because the Holy Spirit lives within us.

This is our fourth lesson in the series *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*. We've entitled this lesson "In the Believer," because we'll be looking at the Holy Spirit's work of applying salvation to individual believers.

Salvation is a fully Trinitarian work. In simple terms, the Father planned our salvation. He's the judge whose wrath had to be appeased by Christ's sacrifice on our behalf. And he's the one who grants salvation to us by grace, through faith, and in Christ. The Son is the one who became incarnate as Jesus. And he accomplished our salvation through his perfect life, atoning death, and victorious resurrection and ascension. But it's primarily the Holy Spirit who applies the various elements of salvation to the lives of believers.

In systematic theology, the Holy Spirit's work of applying salvation to believers is generally treated as part of soteriology, which is the doctrine of salvation. Soteriology is often treated in two major parts, commonly known by their Latin titles. On the one hand, *historia salutis*, or the "history of salvation," is God's saving events and actions that accomplish salvation for his people. As we've seen in prior lessons, the Holy Spirit has always played an important role in *historia salutis* through his many works of providence. On the other hand, *ordo salutis*, meaning the "order of salvation," is the logical and chronological order in which the Holy Spirit applies the various aspects of salvation to individual believers. Since this lesson focuses on the Holy Spirit's work in applying salvation to believers, we'll primarily be dealing with aspects of the *ordo salutis*.

We'll consider the Holy Spirit's work in the believer under two major headings. First, we'll explore his initial application of salvation during our conversion, when we're first saved. And second, we'll explain his ongoing application of salvation in our Christian living. Let's look first at the Spirit's work during conversion.

CONVERSION

The word “conversion” refers to changing from one thing into another. In some Christian traditions, conversion is a well-defined event that occurs when a person comes to saving faith. But in this lesson, we’ll use the term more generally to refer to the beginning stages of salvation, regardless of how a person experiences them.

Every conversion story is a little bit different, so we dare not put everybody into a category and say it must be this way. But whatever happens, it’s the work of the Holy Spirit drawing us, wooing us, convicting us of sin, causing us to see our need of salvation, and then giving us the actual faith — which is trusting in Jesus — that we need to be able to be saved.

— Rev. Mike Osborne

We’ll consider four aspects of the Holy Spirit’s work at the time of conversion. First, we’ll address his regenerating work in our spirits. Second, we’ll focus on his convicting us of sin. Third, we’ll speak of the Spirit’s justifying work that results in forgiveness and righteousness. And fourth, we’ll mention the initial aspects of his sanctifying power in our lives. Let’s begin with the Holy Spirit’s regenerating work.

REGENERATING

The word “regeneration” means “recreation” or “rebirth.” In formal theology, it’s “the event in which a human being moves from a state of spiritual death into a state of spiritual life.” All people enter the world in a state of spiritual death. And we remain spiritually dead unless and until the Holy Spirit regenerates us. We inherit our spiritual deadness from Adam, the first human being. When he sinned in the Garden of Eden, God cursed all humanity to both physical and spiritual death. At that moment, Adam and Eve became spiritually corrupt. And this spiritual corruption is the essence of spiritual death. In Romans 7:14-25, Paul referred to this as our “sinful nature.” He described it by saying that sin lives inside our very bodies and even takes control of our minds.

Moreover, spiritual death affects all the naturally conceived descendants of Adam and Eve. As Paul indicated in Romans 5:12-19, Adam was our representative before God. So, we all share in his guilt, and in its consequences of physical and spiritual death. Passages like John 3:5-7, Romans 8:10, and Colossians 2:13 confirm that every human being comes into this world spiritually dead. Only Jesus avoided this curse, as we read in Hebrews 4:15, and 7:26.

Now, even when we’re spiritually dead, our souls still animate our bodies. And we continue to think, feel, dream, make choices, and engage with the world. But as a result of our spiritual corruption and death, human beings are morally incapable of pleasing God. We have no capacity to please him or merit his blessings. We don’t love

him. We don't have faith in him. Everything we do flows from our sinful hearts and motives. We justly deserve his wrath, and desperately need salvation.

The Third and Fourth Main Points of Doctrine of the Canons of Dort, produced in 1619, summarize the problem of spiritual death this way:

All people are conceived in sin and are born children of wrath, unfit for any saving good, inclined to evil, dead in their sins, and slaves to sin; without the grace of the regenerating Holy Spirit they are neither willing nor able to return to God, to reform their distorted nature, or even to dispose themselves to such reform.

As Paul put it in Romans 8:6-8:

The mind of sinful man is death ... the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God (Romans 8:6-8).

This is a terrible situation for humanity. But it's also why regeneration is so important.

Regeneration is a theological term, which refers to — and I want to use Wayne Grudem's words here — that “secret act of God in which he imparts new spiritual life [in] us.” So, regeneration is a supernatural work of God's spirit. It is about renewing and transforming the heart into divine likeness. It is a change in the life of a sinner. A regenerated person is the one whose spiritual death has been brought to spiritual life. Regeneration is a distinguished mark of a true believer. Regeneration is the activity of God in changing people's hearts. The prophet Ezekiel uses the words like “the heart of stone is removed and is substituted by the heart of the flesh.”

— Rev. Canon Alfred Sebahene, Ph.D.

In regeneration, our souls pass from spiritual death into spiritual life. We see this passage from death to life in places like John 5:24, Ephesians 2:4, 5, and Colossians 2:13. And in other places, Scripture describes this process in terms of rebirth. As Jesus said in John 3:3-6:

No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again... [N]o one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit (John 3:3-6).

The Greek adverb *anōthen* translated “again” in the phrase “born again,” can also be translated “from above.” And in this case, both meanings are true. We receive a second birth — the birth of our spirit — from above, that is, from the Holy Spirit. Of course, all human beings have spirits that animate our bodies. But only believers have

spiritual *life*, because only believers have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Listen to what Paul said in Titus 3:5:

[God] saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5).

In some translations, the Greek word *paliggenesia*, translated here as “rebirth,” is rendered “regeneration,” which is another perfectly legitimate translation.

When the Holy Spirit regenerates us, he gives life to our spirits and inclines us toward God. As Paul taught in Romans 6:4-14, our regeneration is also our death to sin, and our freedom from sin’s mastery.

Some Evangelical traditions believe that only after we exercise saving faith, will the Holy Spirit regenerate us. Others argue that an unregenerate person can’t possess or exercise saving faith, and therefore, that regeneration must logically come first. But we should all agree that regeneration is a gracious and miraculous work that overturns the normal workings of the natural world. When the Holy Spirit regenerates us, he raises the dead by giving life to our spirits. And he changes our very nature as human beings, restoring our moral ability, and giving us new hearts that want to please God.

A born again heart is one that has got the Spirit’s life pulsing in it and showing us God in a new way so that we see he is gracious to us. And he comes to us as Father in our great need, in our great need of mercy and grace. And so, he comes to us this way and it inclines us; we love him. And it’s who we want to serve at our deepest, and it becomes definitive now for our new identity. And I think it is defined by a new love or a new master that we will serve.

— Dr. Mark Saucy

Having looked at conversion in terms of the Holy Spirit regenerating our spirits, let’s talk about his work of convicting us of sin.

CONVICTING

In theology, the term “conviction” identifies the “awareness of the guilt and wrongness of our sin.” Jesus explicitly taught about the Spirit’s convicting work in John 16:8-11, where we read these words:

He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned (John 16:8-11).

The Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin in order to drive us to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. The Spirit begins by making us aware of our sin, so that we acknowledge our guilt. He leads us to agree that we justly deserve God's wrath. He produces in us contrition or brokenness over the wrong that we've done. And he leads us to confess and repent of our sin, in the hope of receiving forgiveness and salvation in Jesus.

Conviction is one of the Holy Spirit's first works when he calls unbelievers to faith. Now, the Spirit calls and convicts many people in ways that fall short of salvation. People can be called to repentance and faith, genuinely recognize their sinfulness, and still not turn to Christ. For instance, in Isaiah 59:12, the prophet described God's sinful covenant people this way:

**Our offenses are ever with us, and we acknowledge our iniquities
(Isaiah 59:12).**

The people were convicted insofar as they recognized and acknowledged their sin. But in verse 20, the Lord declared:

**The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their
sins (Isaiah 59:20).**

It wasn't enough for the people to be called to faith and to feel convicted. In order to be redeemed, they also had to repent.

But when we speak of the Spirit's convicting work as part of conversion, we're thinking about those in whom the Spirit's call is "effectual" — in whom his gracious influence produces true repentance and salvation. This is a special work that doesn't just prepare us to hear the gospel, but that actually applies salvation to us.

We find a good example of this type of conviction in Peter's sermon in Acts 2. On the first Pentecost after Christ's ascension into heaven, Peter preached the gospel to a large crowd of Jews that had gathered in Jerusalem. And the Holy Spirit savingly convicted many of them of their sin, with the result that thousands came to faith. Listen to Luke's account in Acts 2:37-41:

**When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said ...
"Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized
..." With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with
them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." Those who
accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were
added to their number that day (Acts 2:37-41).**

The phrase cut to the heart describes what we've called "conviction," which resulted in 3,000 people being saved that day.

When Peter called the crowd to repent and be baptized, he confirmed what we've been saying about saving conviction. It's entirely possible that some who heard Peter's words were convicted in a general sense, but not as a saving work of the Spirit, so they refused to repent and be saved. But those in whom the call was effectual experienced

saving conviction. They acknowledged and confessed their sin, were genuinely sorrowful over it, and were moved to repentance and baptism.

We can see that conviction and repentance are a work of the Spirit in the church's response to the conversion of the Gentile Cornelius and his household. Prior to Cornelius' conversion, the church consisted entirely of Jews. So, in Acts 10:44, 45, the Jewish believers were surprised when the Holy Spirit was poured out on Cornelius and his household. But, when they heard the news about Cornelius and his household, they praised God for the Gentiles' salvation. Listen to what the church said in Acts 11:18:

God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life (Acts 11:18).

By quoting these words favorably, Luke recognized that the church was right — conviction and repentance are part of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Saving conviction can be described in a variety of ways. But for our purposes, we'll consider four common elements. First, the Holy Spirit's convicting work makes us aware of the preponderance of our sin.

Preponderance of sin

Fallen human beings — and even redeemed human beings — don't just sin occasionally. We sin all the time. We think sinful thoughts; we say sinful words; we do sinful things. As we read in Ecclesiastes 7:20:

There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins (Ecclesiastes 7:20).

And as the apostle John said in 1 John 1:8:

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us (1 John 1:8).

We find similar ideas in Genesis 8:21, Romans 3:23, James 3:2, and many other places.

Worse, it's not just that we all sin. It's that we all sin *a lot*. In Psalm 40:12, David wrote that his sins were more than the hairs on his head. And he was a man after God's own heart! So, the sins of unbelievers are even more numerous. Because of this, part of the Holy Spirit's saving work of conviction is to make us aware of how sinful we really are. He shows us how badly, and how often, we sin.

It's fascinating that as early as Genesis 6:5, we're told that the very imaginations of the thoughts of our hearts — and "heart" being the core of the personality — is "only evil continually." That means, in fact, that we humans are controlled by a selfish desire for accomplishment, achievement, possession, and that thing warps everything we do. You cannot understand human behavior if you

assume that humans are naturally good. In fact, as you look at the history of the race, you have to say, no, we're not naturally good; we're naturally, evilly self-centered.

— Dr. John Oswalt

A second common aspect of the Spirit's saving conviction is that it makes us sensitive to the repulsiveness of sin.

Repulsiveness of sin

When the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, he shows us that our sin isn't just an oversight of some sort, or a technical mistake. It's repugnant, detestable, sickening. It's a foul corruption that rots our bodies and our souls. It's so awful that it required the death of God's only Son to save us from it.

Speaking of Israel's sin in Isaiah 64:6, the prophet Isaiah said that the people had become unclean. Even the works they thought were righteous were nothing but filthy rags. And as a result of their sin, the people were wasting away. And Jesus' rebuke of the lawyers and Pharisees was similar. In Matthew 23:27, he compared them to whitewashed tombs full of corpses and filth.

In Romans 7, Paul helped to explain how sin's repulsiveness can work toward our repentance and salvation. In the context of that chapter, he taught that God's holy, righteous and pure law incites sin in unbelievers. But it does this in such a way that the Holy Spirit can use it to reveal how disgusting sin really is. In Romans 7:13, Paul explained:

In order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful (Romans 7:13).

Here, Paul said that "what was good" and "the commandment" — both referring to the law — revealed the sinfulness of sin.

In many ways, unregenerate human beings are comfortable with sin. We tend to see ourselves as mostly good, and we downplay our moral shortcomings and failures. And there are many reasons for this. Sin is familiar, so we're content with it. Sin justifies the wrong we do, so it makes us feel better about ourselves. Sin offers to fulfill our desires, so it's appealing. But the core reason we accept sin is that we ourselves are sinful. And far from hating ourselves, we tend to use ourselves as the standard by which we judge the rest of the world. We don't see things as God does, and we don't agree with his morality. So, part of the role of the Holy Spirit is to get fallen human beings to see what God sees. In conversion, the Spirit opens our eyes so that we view sin the way God does — as a horrible corruption of the true, the beautiful, and the good.

A third aspect of the Holy Spirit's saving work of conviction is that it makes us aware of the offensiveness of sin to God.

Offensiveness of sin

Under the Holy Spirit's convicting work of salvation, sinners come to realize that their sin offends God's holy character, violates his holy law, and justly deserves his wrath. Listen to just a few examples of this from Scripture. In Ezra 9:6, Ezra prayed:

I am too ashamed and disgraced to lift up my face to you, my God, because our sins are higher than our heads and our guilt has reached to the heavens (Ezra 9:6).

In Isaiah 59:12, the prophet confessed:

Our offenses are many in your sight, and our sins testify against us. Our offenses are ever with us, and we acknowledge our iniquities (Isaiah 59:12).

And in Jeremiah 14:7, Jeremiah prayed:

Our sins testify against us, O Lord ... For our backsliding is great; we have sinned against you (Jeremiah 14:7).

It's this aspect of conviction that makes us realize our lost and condemned state. We discover that God's justice is real, and that our sin has put us on the wrong side of it, so that we stand condemned, and can expect his wrath and punishment.

The fourth common aspect of the Holy Spirit's saving conviction we'll mention is that it shows us the hopelessness of sin.

Hopelessness of sin

Sin puts us in a position of hopelessness because it makes us incapable of pleasing God or of earning his blessings. Because of sin's corruption, we can't do anything to please God, let alone to save ourselves. This is why Paul called us "powerless" in Romans 5:6.

Humanity's fall into sin completely affected our ability to please God. Before the Fall, everything that Adam did — this is interesting to think about — everything that Adam did was pleasing to God, except eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. But once that sin was committed, and once our lives were affected in our heart, mind, soul, entire being, everything that we do now is sinful. And so, not even the righteous actions that we take, or what we would call "righteous" actions, are free of sin... And so, the Fall is complete. And without the gracious work of Christ, there is nothing that we can do ultimately that will please and honor our God.

— Dr. Jeff Lowman

Because sin puts us in this hopeless condition, we're completely dependent on God's grace for forgiveness and salvation. This is why the writers of Scripture insisted that salvation is by grace, and not by works. As Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:8-9:

It is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).

It's the Holy Spirit's convicting work that leads us to this understanding. It causes us to despair of seeking salvation through our own merit, and makes us recognize our helplessness apart from God's mercy and grace. As a result, it drives us to repentance, believing in faith that God will forgive our sins and receive us as his beloved children in Christ.

Now that we've addressed conversion in terms of the Holy Spirit regenerating our spirits and convicting us of sin, let's look at his work of justifying us.

JUSTIFYING

In Protestant theology, the technical term “justification” refers to God's “legal declaration acquitting a sinner from the guilt of his or her sin and crediting him or her with the righteousness of Christ.” The term “justification,” the related verb “justify,” and also the words “righteous” and “righteousness,” come from a family of words related to the Greek verb *dikaioō* (δικαίω). Throughout the New Testament, these words regularly refer to God's act of forgiving sinners and declaring them to be righteous in his sight. We see this in Romans 3:30; 4:5; 5:1, 9; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Galatians 3:8, 11; and many other places.

Moreover, the New Testament consistently teaches that sinners are justified, or declared righteous, by means of faith, on the basis of Christ's atoning sacrifice on our behalf. As just one example, in Romans 3:22-24, Paul wrote:

This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe... [They] are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus (Romans 3:22-24).

In systematic theology, we generally think about justification in terms of Christ's work. After all, it's his atoning death that provides the legal basis for our forgiveness. And it's his resurrection that provides the righteous standing and new life we share after we're forgiven. But the Holy Spirit also plays an important role in our justification. Christ's work was historical — once for all time. But sinners have needed justification all throughout history — before, during and after the time of Christ. And it is the Holy Spirit that solves this problem by applying the justifying benefits of Christ's work to believers in every time period.

Listen to what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 6:11:

You were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God (1 Corinthians 6:11).

Paul affirmed that we're justified in the name of Jesus, meaning that we're declared righteous on the basis of his authority and saving work. But he also said that we're justified in or by the Spirit, because he's the one that applies justification to us. We see something similar in Romans 14:17, where Paul said:

The kingdom of God is ... a matter of ... righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17).

Our righteousness, or justification, is based on Christ's atonement on our behalf. But we experience it in the Holy Spirit because the Spirit is the divine person who applies it to us.

In his letter to Titus, Paul associated the Holy Spirit's work of applying justification to us with our regeneration. He said that our justification wasn't based on our righteousness, but on Christ's. And he indicated that the Holy Spirit applied Christ's righteousness to us as part of his work of conversion, contemporaneously with our regeneration. We see this idea in Titus 3:5-7, where Paul wrote:

[God] saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit ... so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life (Titus 3:5-7).

Paul first said that we were "saved ... by the Holy Spirit." So, when he said that we'd been justified, he meant that the Spirit's saving work includes justification.

Theologians often describe justification in terms of its negative and positive elements. On the negative side, justification cancels, or negates, our guilt by forgiving our sins, so that we're no longer subject to God's condemnation. The Holy Spirit's involvement in forgiving our sins is mentioned, as we read earlier, in 1 Corinthians 6:11, and Titus 3:5. Both of these verses speak of the Spirit "washing" us to cleanse us from sin.

And on the positive side, justification declares us to be righteous in God's sight, so that we have a right to an eternal inheritance along with all its associated benefits. Listen to what Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:13-14:

Having believed, you were marked in [Christ] with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14).

The inheritance Paul had in mind included all the blessings of salvation, many of which he had just listed in Ephesians 1:4-12. In those verses, he mentioned things like holiness, adoption as sons, redemption, forgiveness, the riches of God's grace, and the

fulfillment of all things in heaven and earth in Christ. Every one of these things is part of our inheritance in Christ. And every one of them is guaranteed to us by the Holy Spirit.

So far we've considered conversion by looking at the Holy Spirit's regenerating us, convicting us of sin, and justifying us. So, now let's turn our attention to the initial aspects of his sanctifying work.

SANCTIFYING

In simple terms, sanctification is “the act of making people and things holy.” The Spirit's sanctifying work includes setting people and things apart for God's use, purifying them, and making them fit to be near God's unveiled glory.

When the Bible describes God as holy, it's actually going after a concept that primarily means God is distinct and separate. So, the holiness of God is emphasizing the fact that God is divine and that all the attributes and characteristics we associate with God as distinct from human beings, the creatures he has made. And in an analogous way, therefore, when we talk about holiness of individuals, we're talking about people who become separate from sinfulness to become more like the God who they wish to serve.

— Dr. Simon Vibert

Scripture uses the word “sanctification” in different ways. And correspondingly, theologians recognize multiple types or aspects of sanctification. The kind of sanctification the Holy Spirit applies to us at conversion is sometimes called “definitive sanctification,” because it's a one-time event rather than an ongoing process. At our conversion, the Holy Spirit sets us apart and purifies us by uniting us to Christ. And because Jesus himself is perfectly sanctified — perfectly pure and without sin — we become sanctified, too. Listen to what our Lord said in John 17:19:

For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified (John 17:19).

Jesus' sanctification is necessary to our sanctification because ours flows from his. And in 1 Corinthians 1:30, Paul wrote:

Christ Jesus ... has become ... our ... holiness (1 Corinthians 1:30).

Several other New Testament passages also address this idea, including 1 Corinthians 6:11, and Hebrews 10:10.

Through definitive sanctification, our Lord Jesus becomes the source of our spiritual life and strength now, and later our physical life in the general resurrection. We can see this in many ways in Scripture. For example, in John 15:1-5, Jesus compared

himself to a vine, and believers to the vine's branches. And his point was that our spiritual union causes his life to flow through us. In 1 Corinthians 6:15-17, Paul said that our bodies are members of Christ himself, and that we're also one with him in spirit. And we find similar ideas in the metaphor of the human body that Paul used in places like Ephesians 4:15, 16, where he said that Christ is the head and believers are his body.

These organic aspects of sanctification change what we do, how we think and feel, what we want, and what we love. They impart new life, new freedoms and new abilities to us. For instance, they free us from sin's tyranny, enabling us to resist the sin that always overcomes unbelievers.

In Romans 6–8, Paul talked extensively about the new life we receive when we come to faith. He said that we die to sin and to sin's mastery. And, as a result, we gain the abilities to resist sin and to obey God. Listen to how he described this change in Romans 7:5-6:

When we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. But now, by dying to what once bound us ... we serve in the new way of the Spirit (Romans 7:5-6).

And in Romans 8:9, he added:

You ... are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you (Romans 8:9).

In definitive sanctification, the Holy Spirit remakes us in ways that sin can't overcome, so that we're free to become more and more like Christ.

We all know many people that could benefit from a new start. Sometimes we've handled a relationship poorly. Or we've made bad mistakes at a job. Or we might even have gotten into trouble with the law. Well, something similar is true of unbelievers in their relationship to God. When we enter this world, we're already corrupted by sin and condemned by God. But conversion gives us a new start. It's a remarkable time when the Holy Spirit gives us new life, new brokenness over our sin, a new standing before God, and a new heart to obey him joyfully. And it's the obligation of every believer to be thankful for this new start, and to live in ways that are consistent with the new life and calling we've been given.

Having explored the Holy Spirit's work in our conversion, let's turn to his continual role throughout our individual Christian living.

CHRISTIAN LIVING

As we've just seen, there are several aspects of the Holy Spirit's work in believers that he only does when we're first saved. And these never need to be repeated. He only needs to regenerate our spirits once. Although he constantly convicts believers of sin,

only during our conversion does he do this in a way that drives us to receive Christ as our Savior. He only applies justification to us once, and after we've been justified we never lose our justified status. And the same thing can be said about our new life in definitive sanctification. But many other aspects of the Spirit's work continue throughout our lives as believers.

In this lesson, we'll mention four aspects of our ongoing salvation or Christian living that rely on the Holy Spirit. First, we'll mention the Spirit indwelling us. Second, we'll speak of the continuing aspects of his sanctifying work. Third, we'll see that he works by interceding on our behalf. And fourth, we'll focus on his preserving us to secure our final salvation. Let's look first at his indwelling presence.

INDWELLING

The Holy Spirit's indwelling can be defined as his "special presence within, and spiritual union with, believers." As God, the Holy Spirit is omnipresent — he exists everywhere throughout creation at the same time. But he doesn't manifest his presence the same way at all places and times. And his indwelling of believers is one of the most personal, intimate and powerful ways he manifests his presence.

One of the most amazing facts about salvation is that God himself lives inside us. Once the Spirit sanctifies us at our conversion, we become worthy vessels for his presence. And because he loves us so much, and because he's determined to influence our hearts and minds for the better, he lives within us and never leaves us.

When the Holy Spirit regenerates us, he doesn't simply repair our spirits and then leave us to our own devices. Rather, he takes up residence within us. We see this in places like 1 Corinthians 6:19, 2 Timothy 1:14, and James 4:5. And it's his indwelling presence that actually gives life to our spirits. Listen to what Paul said in Romans 8:9-11:

If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive 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 through his Spirit, who lives in you (Romans 8:9-11).

Here, Paul indicated that Christ indwells us through his Holy Spirit. And it's the Spirit's indwelling presence that gives us spiritual life now, and physical resurrection in the future.

The Scriptures also speak of a ministry of the Holy Spirit that is closely related to his indwelling, which the New Testament calls the filling of the Holy Spirit. Different branches of the church understand the filling of the Spirit in different ways. But we can all agree on at least two things. First, the Holy Spirit always indwells true believers. And second, his filling, or the level of his influence in our lives, varies. From time to time he fills us and influences us more powerfully than at other times. This is why the Scriptures

never command us to be indwelt by God's Spirit, but they do command us to be filled with the Holy Spirit. As the apostle Paul put it in Ephesians 5:18:

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).

When the Holy Spirit fills us, he exercises great, and sometimes overwhelming, influence over us. Our hearts overflow with joy, thankfulness and love for fellow Christians. Or as Paul put it in Galatians 5:22, 23, we see the fruit of the Spirit in great measure.

Through the filling and indwelling of the Holy Spirit, believers are empowered to perform works that God approves, just as Paul taught in Romans 8:5-9. We're also able to worship rightly, approaching God in genuine submission, and appealing to him earnestly and honestly. As Jesus said in John 4:24:

God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

And as Paul put it in Philippians 3:3:

We ... worship by the Spirit of God (Philippians 3:3).

Unbelievers are certainly capable of worshipping God outwardly. They can render prayers, bring offerings, sing, preach and teach. But they can't do these things in ways that God finds acceptable. Their hypocrisy, sin, and spiritual deadness prevent their worship from pleasing him. But with the indwelling Spirit, believers are able to approach him through the Spirit's internal leading and prompting, and in ways that properly acknowledge and honor God's persons, works and attributes.

Now, we should point out that Christians sometimes have the mistaken idea that the Holy Spirit only began to indwell believers in the New Testament age. But believers in the Old Testament were certainly regenerate. And that could only be true because the Holy Spirit indwelt them, too. And many other things that were true of Old Testament believers also depended on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit: They had faith. They performed works acceptable to God. They worshiped rightly. And they had the fruit of the Spirit in their lives. There are certainly aspects of the Holy Spirit's ministry that are richer in the New Testament. But indwelling believers has been part of his task in every age.

In addition to this, the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence also grants believers insight into God's revelation. As Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 2:12-16:

We have ... received ... the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us... The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for ... he cannot understand them ... But we have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:12-16).

As we discussed in an earlier lesson, theologians often identify two types of spiritual insight that are associated with the Holy Spirit. Illumination is:

a divine gift of knowledge or understanding that is primarily cognitive

And inward leading is:

a divine gift of knowledge or understanding that is primarily emotive or intuitive

In both cases, it's the indwelling of the Spirit that grants us this insight into God's revelation and intentions toward us.

The Holy Spirit is given to believers as a resource, as the power of God in their lives, as the wisdom, the “mind of God” in their lives, as the presence of God in their lives because, of course, the Holy Spirit is God... Jesus said when his Spirit came — this is in the end of the Gospel of John — that it would convict the world of sin and righteousness and guide the apostles, and by extension believers, into all truth. So, the Spirit functions in our life as a companion from God to guide our lives. And so, we all experience times when we feel as though the Spirit ... that God is speaking to us, that God is asking us to do this or that or not to do this or that. And that's a real relationship, an actual person-to-person relationship that God has with the believer.

— Dr. Alan Hultberg

Now that we've talked about the Spirit's indwelling presence in the context of our Christian living, let's explore his ongoing sanctifying work.

SANCTIFYING

As we mentioned earlier, we can speak of sanctification in different ways, including the definitive sanctification we receive at conversion. But there is another aspect or type of sanctification that, for our purposes in this lesson, we'll refer to as “ongoing sanctification.” We undergo this type of sanctification throughout our lives because our ongoing sin constantly requires forgiveness and cleansing.

Every believer sins. In fact, we do it every day. If you think you don't, then you haven't thought hard enough about what God requires you to believe, to say, to do, and even to be. But the good news is that whenever we sin, the Holy Spirit is ready to apply forgiveness to us, and to cleanse us from the effects of sin's unrighteousness. That doesn't mean we won't sin again, or that we'll escape the earthly consequences of our

sin. But it does mean that God is continuing to love us, and continuing the saving work he began when he first regenerated us.

When the Holy Spirit regenerates us, he doesn't completely remove sin's corruption and influence from our lives. As Paul explained in Romans 7:14-25, the sin that lives in us still battles with the indwelling Holy Spirit. Scripture describes this struggle in terms of war in places like Romans 7:23, Galatians 5:17, and 1 Peter 2:11. But the good news is, the Spirit dwells in us and works in us. So, even though we continue to stumble because of sin's influence, we also do good works because of the Spirit's influence. As Paul put it in Philippians 2:13:

It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose (Philippians 2:13).

God has provided for us in the Holy Spirit the answer to the “why” and the “how” question of our pursuit of obedience. The “what” question — “What should we do to please God?” — is answered by the commands of the Bible, Old Testament and New. But we wrestle with the question, “Why?” Why should I? What would make me want to obey God? And Paul says it's the Holy Spirit who draws me to reflect on grace, draws me to love Christ, and it's the Holy Spirit who gives me the desire. But when I *want* to act in a way that pleases God, then I still face this other question, “How can I?” because I find weakness in myself. Paul explores that in depth in Romans 7, describing the dilemma, the frustration of an individual who knows that God's law is right, agrees that it is good, but finds something else at work in himself and is frustrated ... unable to do what God has called him to do, and what he wants to do. In Romans 8, Paul gives the answer to that, that even though the law was weak, it could only give commands, but couldn't change our hearts, God, by the Holy Spirit, has now set us free, that we *can* obey through the death of Christ and through the power of the Spirit, as we walk by the Spirit. The righteous requirement of the law is being fulfilled in us because we're walking not according to the flesh — our own unaided human nature — but in the power of the Spirit. That's what Paul encapsulates in that little phrase in Philippians 2. He's at work “both to will and to act for his good pleasure.”

— Dr. Dennis E. Johnson

Our ongoing sanctification is a process through which the Holy Spirit continually applies forgiveness and cleansing to us when we sin, and continually turns us away from sin and toward righteousness. Ideally, this process should make us more and more obedient to God over the course of our lives. Scripture refers to this lifelong improvement as “maturity” in Ephesians 4:13, Colossians 4:12, Hebrews 5:14, and many other places. As just one example, in James 1:4 we read:

Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete (James 1:4).

Through the Holy Spirit's influence, this process of maturing produces spiritual results in the lives of believers.

Throughout Scripture, the metaphor of fruit is often used to describe these results. We see this in John the Baptist's condemnation of the Pharisees and Sadducees in Matthew 3:8-10. We find it in Jesus' teachings about true and false obedience in the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 7:16-20. It's a key part of Jesus' teachings about good works in John 15:1-16. And as we mentioned earlier, in Galatians 5, Paul described specific fruit the Spirit manifests in the lives of those he indwells. Listen to what Paul wrote in Galatians 5:17-25:

The sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature... [T]he fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control... Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit (Galatians 5:17-25).

Paul's discussion of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5 resembles his teachings in Romans 6–8. In both places, he contrasted the different influences the Spirit and sin have on our desires. And he explained that the only way to obey God from the heart, and to manifest righteous characteristics, is to be indwelled by the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes Christians wrongly equate the fruit of the Spirit with spiritual gifts. As we saw in a prior lesson, the Holy Spirit gives different gifts to each believer in the New Testament. But the fruit of the Spirit is the obedient living the Spirit produces in all believers. So, it should be relatively similar in all our lives.

Now, as we think about the Spirit's ongoing work of sanctification in believers, we should mention that some theological traditions refer to a process of "progressive sanctification." This term refers to the idea that we progress in holiness, becoming more and more godly throughout our Christian lives. It's certainly true that Christians *should* progressively get more spiritually mature, and that we should produce more and more fruit. But even true believers can fail to grow in this way. Listen to how Peter described these aspects of sanctification in 2 Peter 1:5-9:

Make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he ... has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins (2 Peter 1:5-9).

Peter's list of sanctified qualities looks a lot like Paul's list of the fruit of the Spirit. And he did say that these characteristics should be increasing in our lives. In other words, they *should* be progressive. But he also admitted that, through our own fault, even believers can lack this fruit.

The Bible tells us that it is the Holy Spirit who produces the desire and the action of his goodwill, but we also read in Scripture — in different parts — that we are commanded to make every effort. We are commanded to be diligent in our sanctification, so what we can see is that the Holy Spirit produces in us desires and also produces in us the ability to do what God wants. However, the believer must respond, striving, using the means of grace, being always alert and vigilant to resist the temptation so that he will be able to grow in the grace of the Lord.

— Dr. David Correa, D.Min., translation

Having spoken of the Holy Spirit's role in our Christian living in terms of his indwelling presence and our ongoing sanctification, let's briefly mention his interceding on our behalf.

INTERCEDING

Intercession is the Holy Spirit's work of "petitioning the Father on behalf of believers." It's similar to what human beings do when we defend someone who is being threatened or harmed; or when we ask someone to offer aid to another; or when we pray for someone's healing, forgiveness or blessing. Listen to Paul's description of the Spirit's intercession in Romans 8:26-27:

The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will (Romans 8:26-27).

Sometimes when Scripture speaks of God knowing our hearts, it carries a threat of judgment. We see this in places like Jeremiah 4:14, 1 Corinthians 4:5, and Hebrews 4:12. But in the case of *believers*, Christ has taken away our condemnation. So, when the Spirit searches *our* hearts, it's always for our benefit. He sees the needs we can't express, and expresses them for us. He sees the sin we don't even recognize, and appeals for forgiveness on our behalf. He prays for us in precisely the way we ought to pray but don't. And this intercession is always successful. Why? Because, as Paul said, the Spirit always intercedes in accordance with God's will. And to that, we might add that the Father always honors the prayers of the Spirit because the Spirit is himself God.

Now, that doesn't mean our lives are free from sin, pain and difficulty. After all, the Spirit knows why the Father planned these things for our lives, and he wouldn't intercede to undo that plan. But the Spirit also knows, just as Paul explained just a few lines later in Romans 8:28-30, that God is using all the bad things in our lives for our good. He's using them to complete our sanctification, and to bring us into a wonderful, everlasting inheritance in Christ.

Prayer is a remarkable thing, isn't it? God Almighty, the Creator of the universe, the Perfect and Holy One listens to us, and even responds to us by intervening in our lives. And he doesn't do it because he has to, but because he wants to. He loves to hear our praises and thanks. He generously forgives us when we confess our sins. And he responds to our petitions with concern and wisdom. But every believer has times when our hearts and heads are so full that we simply can't express ourselves well in prayer. Every believer has times when our hearts and heads are so stubborn that we simply refuse to pray as we should. And every believer has times when our ignorance of our incomprehensible God and of his inscrutable ways prevent us from approaching him as he deserves. So, isn't it comforting to know that whether we're at our best or our worst, the Holy Spirit himself prays on our behalf?

So far, we've explored Christian living by looking at the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence, his work of ongoing sanctification, and his interceding for us. Now let's turn our attention to his work of preserving believers for our final salvation.

PRESERVING

Preservation is the Holy Spirit's "continuous, gracious work of ensuring that believers persevere in faith until our salvation is complete." The Holy Spirit's preserving work flows from his indwelling presence, so that our hearts remain faithful to God. This doesn't mean that we never doubt or sin. But it does mean that our salvation is secure, because the Spirit maintains saving faith within us. Listen to what Paul said in Romans 8:11-14:

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 through his Spirit, who lives in you... [I]f by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God (Romans 8:11-14).

Paul taught that if the Holy Spirit has regenerated us and indwells us, then he also leads us. And if he leads us, then we are permanently sons of God, and he will ultimately raise our bodies in glory.

When we come to faith in Christ, our salvation is secure forever. This isn't because God has promised to save us no matter what we do. Rather, it's because the Holy Spirit preserves us. He makes sure that true believers actively remain in the faith, and never finally and completely abandon Christ. As Paul wrote in Philippians 1:6:

He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:6).

We know that the Spirit began our salvation during our conversion. So we have assurance that he will continue to apply salvation to us until our glorification at Jesus' return. We find this same idea in places like Galatians 3:1-5, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24, and 1 Peter 1:3-5.

One of the great truths of our salvation is what we call “the perseverance of the saints” — although Spurgeon liked to refer to it as “the perseverance of the *Savior*,” and that the Savior persevered on our behalf, and because we’re in him, we’re secure in him. And I don’t disagree with that at all. Yet, there is a subjective side to perseverance wherein the Spirit of God steps in and uses, really, what the Puritans used to call “practical means” to ensure that we persevere in terms of our experience. So, how does he do that? ... Well, he does that in this loving, gentle, quiet way, always, though, using the Word to guide us. And that’s why we speak in the Reformation tradition of “the Word and the Spirit” — the Word and the Spirit, the Word and the Spirit — always working in beautiful harmony to take us to the end goal that God has for our salvation.

— Dr. Danny Akin

Another very common way Scripture speaks of the Holy Spirit’s preserving work is through the language of a legal seal. In the ancient world, a seal was often a ring or other device that could be pressed into wet clay or wax, or even metal, in order to leave a physical impression. This impression functioned much like a signature, so that it authenticated and authorized the document or object to which it was applied. For example, Matthew 27:66 mentions that when Jesus was buried, the Romans put a seal on the stone so that they would know if anyone had disturbed Jesus’ body in its tomb.

In the case of the Holy Spirit, he functions as God’s seal of ownership, demonstrating that those who possess the Spirit truly belong to God. And no one can take them away from God. In some ways, this resembles the practices of ancient servanthood. For instance, Exodus 21:6 describes the practice of piercing a servant’s ear to mark him as a servant for life. In a similar way, the Holy Spirit seals believers with God’s ownership. Paul put it this way in 2 Corinthians 1:22:

[God] set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come (2 Corinthians 1:22).

When God seals us with the Holy Spirit, he doesn’t just mark us as his possession. He also *guarantees* that the salvation that we’ve begun to experience will eventually come to us in all its fullness. And unlike seals and marks in ancient servanthood, God’s seal doesn’t just mark us as *servants*. It also marks us as his children and heirs. Listen to how Paul combined these ideas in 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 are God's possession (Ephesians 1:13-14).

When we receive the Holy Spirit, we receive God's promise that guarantees not just the future completion of our salvation, but also our "inheritance." An inheritance isn't what a servant receives from his master. It's what a child receives from his father.

And that inheritance will be our final salvation — our *glorification*, which the Holy Spirit will apply to us when Jesus returns. Glorification includes the resurrection of our bodies to an incorruptible, immortal state. As we've seen, Paul talked about this in Romans 8:11-14. But he went into even more detail throughout 1 Corinthians 15. For example, in verses 37-44, he compared our existing bodies to seeds. Correspondingly, he compared our resurrected bodies to the plants that grow from those seeds. Listen to what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:42-44:

The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15:42-44).

Our powerful, glorified bodies will have been remade by the Holy Spirit so that they're morally and physically perfect. They will be incapable of dishonor and sin, and impervious to sickness and death. In fact, as Paul went on to teach in 1 Corinthians 15:48, 49, our resurrected bodies will be just like the glorified body that Jesus received when he was resurrected. Paul put it this way in 2 Corinthians 3:18:

We, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Our glorification will be our final state, when we are completely free from the presence, influence and effects of sin in both our bodies and our souls, and when we finally enter into the glorious blessings of the new heavens and new earth.

The preserving work of the Holy Spirit, and the perseverance it produces in our lives, should give us tremendous confidence and peace. God's Spirit lives inside us, ensuring that the salvation we've already begun to experience will never end. And he will eventually bring us into even greater blessings, including our total freedom from sin's presence and effects, and our ultimate resurrection in glory. If we truly believe the gospel, we never need to fear that our salvation might be lost. Instead, we can — and *should* — rest in the promise that the Spirit will be faithful to complete the work he began.

CONCLUSION

In our lesson on the Holy Spirit in the believer, we've explored conversion by looking at the Spirit's work of regenerating, convicting, justifying and sanctifying us. And we've considered his role in Christian living by looking at his indwelling, sanctifying, interceding for and preserving believers.

In this series on pneumatology, we've explored the deity, person and work of the Holy Spirit. We've paid particular attention to the different aspects of his involvement in the Trinity, the world, the church, and the believer. And we've seen that the Spirit is the person of the Trinity who most directly engages with creation, and most directly impacts our lives. If we remember how important his ministries are, and how present with us he is, and if we *rely* on those things, we'll be better prepared to navigate the difficulties and stresses of life. And we'll be much more aware of how good our God is, and of how much thanks, praise and loyalty he deserves.

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We Believe in the Holy Spirit

LESSON
FOUR

In the Believer
Faculty Forum



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We Believe in the Holy Spirit

Lesson Four: In the Believer

Faculty Forum

With

Dr. Danny Akin
Dr. Greg R. Allison
Dr. Uche Anizor
Pastor Pierre Bitar
Dr. P. J. Buys
Rev. Larry Cockrell
Dr. David Correa, D.Min.
Dr. Joseph D. Fantin

Dr. Dana M. Harris
Dr. Alan Hultberg
Dr. Dennis E. Johnson
Dr. Craig S. Keener
Dr. Dan Lacich
Dr. John McKinley
Dr. Dinorah Méndez
Rev. Mike Osborne

Dr. Charles L. Quarles
Dr. Ramesh Richard
Dr. Philip Ryken
Pastor Ashraf Sara
Dr. Mark Saucy
Dr. Glen G. Scorgie
Dr. Imad Shehadeh
Dr. Simon Vibert

Question 1:

How is the Holy Spirit involved in our salvation?

Dr. Dennis E. Johnson

The Holy Spirit is the applier of our salvation. He's the one who brings our stony hearts to life, makes them tender to God's word, who gives us the ability to believe and trust in Christ and so to be united vitally to Christ. Peter speaks of this in the opening of his letter, 1 Peter 1, when he speaks of our being chosen according to the foreknowledge, that is, the advance love of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit to obey Christ ... and to be sprinkled with his redeeming blood. Paul in Ephesians 1 gives us even more detail in that glorious opening benediction from 1:3-14, speaking of the Father's choice of our being redeemed through the beloved one, forgiven of our sins, and then being sealed by the Holy Spirit as the pledge, the down payment, the first installment of our final inheritance.

Dr. Glen G. Scorgie

The mission of God in our salvation originates in the heart, the Father's heart, and is implemented through the ready obedience of the Son. And yet, there's a role that remains for the Holy Spirit who comes to bring to bear in our own lives the merits and achievements of Christ. He is the one who takes what Christ has achieved and glues it, in a sense, to us, unites us to Christ, makes that link so that what Christ has done becomes ours, and ever after becomes God with us, the one who guides us through the journey, the pilgrim's progress to the celestial city, renewing us into conformity to the image of Christ.

Question 2:

What is the Holy Spirit's role in conversion?

Dr. Greg R. Allison

Conversion is the human response to the mighty work of God in saving us... It consists of two aspects: repentance or turning away from our sin, and faith, trusting Jesus Christ to save us. So, repentance and faith, that's conversion. That's the human response to God's work of calling us to himself, regenerating us, justifying us, uniting us with his Son, adopting us into his family. Does the Holy Spirit play a role in our conversion? Absolutely. I believe that the Holy Spirit is the one who gives us the grace, who prompts repentance and faith so that, certainly repentance is a human response, certainly faith is a human response to God's work in our life, but that's not a *merely* human response. It's a response that's prompted by God's grace that's enabled by the Spirit of God. So, we repent, we trust Jesus Christ, we are converted. And that's not just on our own effort, but that's guided by and empowered by the Spirit who is at work in our life.

Rev. Mike Osborne

If we define conversion as "repentance plus faith," the Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit is behind both of those things... Ephesians 2:1 says that we are dead in trespasses and sins before we are regenerated. So, the Holy Spirit's gifts of repentance and faith are instrumental in our salvation, otherwise we would remain dead in sin. We would just remain unable. You know, our wills are bound. Our wills are unable to respond to God apart from something that God does to us. So, we believe that the Holy Spirit is the one who is actively at work convicting the heart. You know, there is this concept of effectual calling. That's where the Holy Spirit enlightens the mind, sort of turns on the light bulb. For example, I remember in my life — I know that not everybody has this experience — but I can actually remember a key moment in my own spiritual journey where I sensed that the light bulb came on. I was a college junior talking to a Christian who was sharing the Scriptures with me, and I really felt in that moment that the light bulb came on. I believe that's the work of the Holy Spirit.

Question 3:

What is regeneration?

Dr. Charles L. Quarles

I think that regeneration is a much more robust term than we sometimes consider as Christian theologians or students of the Bible... The most extensive discussion of regeneration in the New Testament is 1 Peter 1:3–2:3, almost an entire chapter unpacking the doctrine of regeneration. There the apostle Peter, with reference to John 3, tells us several important points about regeneration. Number one, he teaches us that regeneration results in a new relationship with God. In the new birth, we who were the enemies of God become the children of God. When he gives us spiritual

birth, he becomes our Father; we become his children — an amazing truth. Because of that new relationship with God, we also have new rights with God. Peter says that we now have a right to the Father's protection. Fathers protect their children. Now the heavenly Father protects his spiritual children. He says that we have a right to a heavenly inheritance. Every child has a place in their father's home. Now we have a place in our Father's home by virtue of the new birth. But in addition to the new relationship and the new rights — there's a very important point to emphasize — we have a new resemblance to God. When you think about it, the Lord Jesus and the apostle Peter could have emphasized our new relationship to and rights with God by simply using the imagery of adoption, but they prefer the language of new birth, regeneration, instead. Why? Because there's an important distinction between an adoptive child and a child that you conceived and to whom you gave birth. What's the difference? Well, the child that you gave birth to has your own DNA, your own make up, and so that child resembles you as his parent in many remarkable ways. And so the Lord Jesus and the apostle Peter say God didn't just adopt us as his children, he gave us new birth. As the apostle John will say in 1 John, God's seed is in the believer — his spiritual DNA, if you will — not so that we become God as he is God, obviously, but so that we partake of his holy character. The new birth emphasizes that truth, "like Father, like son." And finally, I might add, though we could go on, that the new birth results in new responsibilities to God. As Peter unpacks the doctrine of new birth, he describes believers as, "obedient children." It's the responsibility of a child to honor father and mother and obey father and mother. And now that we have become God's children through the new birth, our responsibility to submit to his authority and obey him is heightened all the more. So, new relationship, new rights, new resemblance, and new responsibilities are all entailed in the new birth doctrine.

Rev. Mike Osborne

Regeneration is a change of heart. Probably the simplest and most familiar way of talking about regeneration is to quote Jesus in John 3 where he speaks to Nicodemus about being born again. And that's really what regeneration is. It is like a rebirth. Before we are regenerated we have hearts, and the heart is the center of our being, the seat of our emotions and will. It is really who we are. The heart is dead in sin, unable to say "yes" to God. No matter how often we might hear the gospel, we can't believe. We can't repent. So, what must happen is that the Holy Spirit causes us to have new life. He imparts life to a dead heart. The way that I have sometimes said it is that it's like going into a morgue and breathing life into a dead body. That's what regeneration is. What it looks like is a radical break from the old, a breach with sin. It's something that is an amazing change. "This is a new creation," Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5. We are no longer who we used to be. And, now, it might be lived out later, but there is a moment or a period of time in which the Holy Spirit is breathing life into the dead heart and causing us to then be able to respond in repentance and faith... Regeneration comes first. I won't be saved unless God first comes into my heart. We love because he first loved us.

Question 4:**Is regeneration solely an act of the Holy Spirit, or do humans play a part as well?****Dr. Danny Akin**

You know, when we talk about the doctrine of regeneration, we're talking about a doctrine that deals with the work of God in our life in bringing us to faith in Christ. So, you could raise the question, "Well, then is the Holy Spirit the only one acting in the area of regeneration?" The answer would be, "Yes, *but...*" Yes, it is the Holy Spirit that regenerates us, that gives us the new birth, that makes us new. Paul said, "... not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing work of the Holy Spirit." That's Titus 3:5... Having said that, is there a human part that is also played in the work of regeneration? The answer is, yes. We do, as a result of the work of regeneration, repent and exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. So, will regeneration always involve our repentance and faith? Yes. But our repentance and faith is indeed the spiritual response to the work of regeneration. I mean, after all, we are born again; we are regenerated; we are made new because we're dead, and dead men and women can't do anything but be dead. And so, without the Spirit making us alive, we would not have the capacity to respond, we would not have the capacity to repent and exercise faith.

Dr. David Correa, D.Min. (translation)

Regeneration is a monergistic work. That means that it's a work that only God performs, through his Spirit, in the sinner. Although some church traditions insist that human beings play a role in their regeneration, the Bible tells us otherwise. We read in Ephesians 2:1 that in our condition as sinners, we're spiritually dead... To use an analogy, we are not in the intensive care room in the hospital because we have a deadly disease. As far as Scripture is concerned, sinners are in the morgue. And the Holy Spirit doesn't put medicine next to our hospital beds so that if we want it, we take it to heal ourselves. What the Holy Spirit really does is apply defibrillator paddles to our dead heart. The reason, then, why the work of regeneration is an exclusive work of the Holy Spirit is because the sinner, as I said, is spiritually dead and is unable to save himself.

Question 5:**Why must the Holy Spirit make us aware of how sinful we really are?****Dr. P. J. Buys**

The Bible makes it very clear that every human being coming into this world, without a relationship with Christ, the person is deaf and blind and dead. And the whole of creation has been tainted by sin, and ourselves, our emotions, our feelings, our understanding, everything is tainted by sin. And only when the Holy Spirit opens our eyes and we are redeemed in Christ, we have developed a whole new understanding

of what the meaning of life really is all about, and our whole value system is then changed.

Dr. Philip Ryken

There is no part of us that is not tainted and affected by sin. There's no part of our minds, there's no part of our wills, there's no part of our affections where we can point to and we can say, now that part of me is perfect and that part of me is sinful. No, it's: what I think is affected by sinful thoughts; what I choose is affected by a sinful will; the things that I love are affected by sin because some of the things I love are not the things that God wants me to love, and that's because of a sinful heart. And sin really runs through the whole of us, which is one of the reasons we need a complete salvation and a complete cleansing, a complete forgiveness through the cross, but also a complete work of the Holy Spirit, which ultimately will cleanse us from all that sin. But it goes all the way through us.

Question 6:

Why are we incapable of pleasing God through our own efforts?

Dr. Simon Vibert

Well, as a result of humanity's fall into sin, we find a tension within all of us. There is a sense in which we want to do good. We want to do things which please God, but we also have a contrary nature within us which wants to rule our own life without reference to God. And so, consequently we find, as Paul describes it in Romans, that I know the good that I want to do, but I find another power at work in me which means that I can't do that which I know I should. So, we're torn creatures in that respect. We have a desire to do good, but actually we cannot do it outside of Christ.

Rev. Larry Cockrell

Our human nature hinders us from trying to do good first and foremost because, obviously, this nature is a fallen nature. Sin impacted it, and because of that our nature is really in rebellion against God. And that being the case, even as Christians, when we have been born again, we see now that there is this inner conflict that takes place. And Paul speaks of it well in Romans 7 when he talks about the war between the flesh and the spirit... He recognized that there was a law in his members warring against the law of his mind so that he would not do the will of God in that respect there. And so, as a Christian, we have to appreciate and recognize this great battle that takes place within, this great tension that really hinders us and keeps us from trying to really live and do what's right in the sight of the Lord. But Paul does go on to say thanks be to God for our Lord Jesus Christ who gives us the victory in that respect there. And so, while we do struggle, we can rejoice in knowing that ultimately we do have victory in Christ and that we don't have to be defeated nor allow our natures to dominate us as it did in times past when we did not know Christ as our personal Lord and Savior.

Question 7:**What does it mean that the Holy Spirit guarantees us an eternal inheritance?****Dr. Danny Akin**

You know, one of God's great gifts at salvation is the gift of the Holy Spirit. And the Bible speaks in so many different ways about how the Spirit ministers in our lives as Christians to ultimately bring us to conformity to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1 talks about the fact that we're sealed by the Holy Spirit, which gives us the assurance that our salvation is a permanent reality. I didn't do anything to earn it, I can't do anything to lose it, and God gave the Spirit as a down payment to ensure that my salvation will reach fruition. I am going to be like the Lord Jesus Christ because of the promise of the Holy Spirit.

Dr. Dana M. Harris

When Jesus came, he ushered in the kingdom of God. For us right now this is a spiritual reality in the present time on earth, but one day it will be a physical reality when Jesus returns. So, as believers, we're caught in a tension, which is sometimes described as "the already-not yet." Part of the "already" is the fact that we have the Holy Spirit as a down payment. This is what Paul talks about in Ephesians 1:14. This down payment is an assurance that we will one day have our eternal inheritance. We also experience this in the reality of spiritual gifts and the spiritual bond that we feel between believers around the world. But we also know that we live in a world that is wracked by evil and is still under the effects of a world in condemnation. So, we look forward to that day when we will see Jesus face to face and when he will return and bring about the complete and total eradication of evil.

Dr. Craig S. Keener

Paul says in 2 Corinthians and Ephesians 1, he uses a term that often appears in business documents for a down payment. He says that we have received the first installment of our future inheritance by receiving the Spirit. We have received a foretaste of the future world, because we're not just expecting a future resurrection and a future Messiah, a future king, but we're expecting a king who has already come, who has already been raised from the dead and, therefore, for us, we have a foretaste, and we need to live like the people of a future age. We need to live for the future in this present age to let the world have a foretaste of what heaven is going to be like.

Question 8:**What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit?****Dr. Gregg R. Allison**

In Ephesians 5:18 Paul commands us, "Do not be drunk with wine. That leads to debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit." What does it mean to be filled with the

Spirit? It means to be commanded, to be directed and guided, controlled by the Spirit in all aspects of our life. If we look at Paul's command, we do see that it's an imperative, it is a command, which means we can obey it or we can disobey it. Now, we certainly are to obey it, but it is a responsibility of ours to respond to this command and exercise obedience to be filled. It's also an ongoing imperative, an ongoing command. We could paraphrase it: *keep on* being filled, *keep on* being controlled or guided by the Holy Spirit, moment by moment. So, it's a command that draws our attention to obedience, being controlled by the Spirit moment by moment. It's also a passive command. It's not an active, "throw the ball" command. Rather, it's a passive command — *be* filled. And the step of obedience that is required is that we put ourselves in a position of yieldedness; we adopt a posture of yielding to the Spirit's control and guidance in our life. So, what does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit? It means to be consciously obedient, submitting to, yielding to the Spirit's direction and control, guidance in our life, moment by moment.

Dr. Imad Shehadeh (translation)

Being filled with the Spirit differs from the indwelling of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit dwells in every believer. The presence of God is in his life. But being filled is different. It means that the Holy Spirit controls man's life so that he has the fruits of the Holy Spirit, the attributes of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. In other words, the attributes of Christ now control a person so that he lives a totally different life than if he lived by his own natural power... I become sure that I am filled with the Holy Spirit when I become sure of what Christ did for me on the cross. Every time I become more sure of what Christ has done for me, there I find the Holy Spirit, because this is what he cares about. All these things lead me to be delivered from dependence on myself to dependence on what he has done. He has forgiven me and clothed me with his righteousness. And every time I became more sure of what he has done, I find the Holy Spirit present in front of me... This is what it is meant by being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Dr. Craig S. Keener

When we read that Moses laid hands on Joshua, Joshua is filled with the Holy Spirit in Deuteronomy 34. He's filled with the spirit of wisdom, and that's so that he can lead God's people. We also read elsewhere in the Pentateuch that God filled someone with the holy spirit of wisdom so that they could do artwork and exquisite work on the architecture of the tabernacle. So, in Acts 6, we also read of those who are going to be leading in terms of caring for the poor, that they are filled with the spirit of wisdom. So, we have this language used in various places. Now, elsewhere in Luke and in Acts we read about being filled with the Spirit to prophesy. In Ephesians 5:18, in the context, it says don't be drunk with wine, but instead be filled with the Spirit and then describes what that is to look like, where you're praising God, you're thanking God for all things, and you're serving one another. So, there are a number of different expressions of the way that the Spirit fills us for a number of different things, for our particular callings, and then the kind of thing that we all need to be filled with the Spirit for — to praise God and to serve one another.

Rev. Mike Osborne

In his letter to the Ephesians Paul uses the term “be filled” or “keep on being filled” with the Holy Spirit. “Don’t be drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit,” and then he goes on to describe what it looks like to be filled with the Spirit by singing and so on, like that. To be filled with the Spirit means that a believer is walking with the Spirit or is keeping in step with the Spirit, to refer to what Paul says in the book of Galatians. It is to be obedient. It is to be filled with joy. It is to be, really, I would say, it’s to be in our experience what we already are in our position. And this is something that is determined to some degree by the choices and the actions of the believer of himself or herself. If we choose to take off the old self and put on the new self, if we choose to worship and trust God and repent of known sin and those types of behaviors, then the Holy Spirit is free to fill us with himself. And he is the source of our power for obedience. So, as I put to death, or mortify, the deeds of my flesh, the Holy Spirit finds that attractive. As I repent of sin, as I confess, as I love my brothers and sisters, the Holy Spirit finds those behaviors attractive and fills us with his Spirit. We’re able to quench the Holy Spirit. We’re able to grieve the Spirit by our bad choices and bad actions. So, to be filled with the Spirit means to walk in conformity with his will and his expectations. What it results in would be the fruit of the Spirit. As we are filled with the Spirit we exhibit love, joy, peace, patience and so on.

Question 9:**What do we mean by an inward leading of the Holy Spirit?****Dr. Craig S. Keener**

When we speak of an inward leading of the Holy Spirit, we’re not speaking of something like ... like something that would compete with Scripture. This is, you know, the Spirit can lead us through Scripture, but sometimes the Spirit also leads us in personal ways. For example, in Romans 8 and in Galatians 4 the Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we’re God’s children, so reminding us that we belong to God. Romans 5:5, in the context, God’s love is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, pointing to the cross, so reminding us that God loves us. Romans 8 and Galatians 5 speak directly of the leading of the Spirit but especially in the context of moral empowerment, leading us to do what’s right and not to do what’s wrong. The book of Acts tends to emphasize more especially power for evangelism, so in Acts 8:29 the Spirit speaks to Philip and says, “Run up to this chariot and let this person know...” in other words, about Christ. In chapter 10 ... the Spirit tells Peter to go down and meet with these Gentiles who have come to see him, so again, crossing barriers to bring people the gospel. The Spirit can lead us in evangelism. Nehemiah speaks of a plan that he had. He says, “God put it in my heart,” and so we can also speak in those terms. Or the psalmist saying, “God, please lead me in your ways.” Sometimes the psalmist might not even know how, like in the language of Proverbs,

God is ordering the psalmist's steps. But the idea is that we're trusting God to lead us and guide us, even in our personal lives.

Dr. Glen G. Scorgie

A very familiar phrase and experience for Christians is the inward leading of the Holy Spirit. First of all, I don't think we should be afraid of this phrase out of fear of excessive subjectivity. Of course, the inward leading of the Holy Spirit must always resonate with and be anchored in the historic truths revealed to us in Scripture. That's the anchor for the inward leading of the Holy Spirit. But the wonderful good news is that the experience of a Christian is not purely memory of historical events, but a living present-tense experience of God with us. And this inward leading of the Holy Spirit, this inward presence that we sense is resonant with the past, but it's also something that comes to us often in the form of wisdom, where the Holy Spirit dismantles all the rationalizations, all the evasions, and we are confronted with what really is the way. And that voice of wisdom in the consecrated Christian's mind can be the form the inward leading of the Holy Spirit takes. And it's such an exciting adventure to know that we not only have the past to anchor our Christian experience, but the ongoing presence of the Holy Spirit to guide us forward day by day in this intensely personal and immediate way.

Question 10:

If the Spirit regenerates us at conversion, what does Scripture mean when it says that believers can grieve or quench the Holy Spirit?

Dr. John McKinley

Christians worry about two statements in the Bible where we're warned not to grieve or quench the Holy Spirit, so we wonder, what are these things? Grieving the Spirit comes from Ephesians 4:30 where the program of the Spirit to unify the church is described as something that we destroy, we fight against, by lying to one another and tearing apart that unity. So, we grieve the Spirit when we ruin his work, and it's something where we affect his project, and it's distressing to him. Quenching the Spirit is from another passage where we're warned to be open to what the Spirit is doing in us. Some people associate that with denouncing prophecies, but I think that's not the case. Quenching the Spirit is just talking about the Spirit according to the metaphor of fire, and you put out fire with water. And it's just a general recommendation to be open to the Spirit's work in us, that we still have some freedom to resist God and be less open to him, like a kinked hose, and instead be a hose that doesn't have that kink in it and the water flows through freely.

Dr. Dinorah Méndez (translation)

The Bible teaches two major offenses against the Holy Spirit. One is quenching the Spirit and the other is grieving the Holy Spirit. An easy way for me to explain it would be that we quench the Spirit when we don't do what he tells us to do or inspires us to do as Christians. The Holy Spirit is the one who guides us in the

Christian life and enlightens us to understand the truths that are in Scripture. But he also dwells in us as believers. He moves in us to act in a Christian manner, but if we deny this influence, the leading of the Holy Spirit is like a flame. One of the metaphors that the Bible uses for the Holy Spirit is that he is like a flame, like fire, but the flame begins to quench. So, we quench the Spirit when we do not do what we should. We grieve the Spirit, that is, we sadden him. And that is proof that he's a person. You cannot sadden a force or an energy, but a person, yes. We grieve the Holy Spirit when we do what we should not do. That is to say, when we sin, when we disobey, when we do something wrong deliberately.

Dr. Alan Hultberg

Paul warns his readers not to grieve the Holy Spirit, not to quench the Holy Spirit, and he doesn't actually explain what he means by that, and so it's left to us to try to piece that together. But it seems to me, because the Holy Spirit is our connection to God, is God's presence in our life, who guides us, who chastises us, etc., that when we neglect to pay attention to what the Spirit of God is telling us, or when we outright oppose or sin against whatever the Spirit is telling us, that we're quenching the Spirit and that we grieve the Spirit.

Pastor Ashraf Sara (translation)

As we discuss the topic of, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption," let us begin by talking about in the beginning about the concept of the Holy Spirit as a person... We know that God is a jealous God, a loving God; God grieves; God rejoices. We grieve God when we do not follow after God's heart ... and we act against God's will in our lives. When we talk about God, God is holy. His Spirit is holy, is he not? Why is that? It's because if we want to define God in one word, it would be "holy." God *is* holy... So, as a church, as the body of Christ and as the bride of Christ, we should pay attention to these points in order not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God.

Question 11:

What did Paul mean when he said that the Holy Spirit is at work in us to will and to act according to his good purpose (Philippians 2:13)?

Dr. Joseph D. Fantin

Philippians 2:13 is a great verse, often difficult coming after 2:12, which has another difficult passage in there as well. It doesn't explicitly say the Holy Spirit, but I think it is implied there... But in order to understand that passage, I think you need to see the entire context. The chapter starts out with an exhortation for people to be unified, to care for one another — very crucial. Then he gives an illustration, using the life of Christ, who sacrifices more than any of us will, and he's a solid example of fulfilling what was commanded in the beginning of 2. And then after this hymn, in verse 12 he tells us we should work out our salvation with fear and trembling... He's talking about those being saved, how they should actually live and then that's going to

demand obedience; saved people should be obedient. And then he tells us in the next verse that God provides the actual resources in order to accomplish that obedience. And he doesn't just give us the help to do it, but he also gives us the will as well. This is not just slavish following orders. But yet, God, through the Holy Spirit in the sanctification process, if you will, actually provides the resources to do it as well as to want to do it. It's part of that transforming relationship that we have with Christ.

Dr. Ramesh Richard

There are different kinds of theories of how the Spirit of God and you are interacting for the sake of becoming holy. One view is to say, you "let go and let God." This is a very famous view. It sounds good on the surface because it addresses matters of control and the need for surrender, where you let go and let God. But on the other side, it could mean that you don't take any responsibility for your spiritual life, and therefore, there's no culpability attached to it. So, instead of "let go and let God," my usual suggestion is to *get going* and let God. On the adverse side of that passivity is a whole bunch of self-effort, that everything depends on the self to produce holiness. And when it depends on the self to produce holiness, it assumes that you have power to do what only God can do inside you. It can become manipulated; it can even fall into a whole degree of legalism. So, between license and legalism is what I am going to call a "grace-operated interactionism," or a "Spirit-stimulated interactionism." Philippians 2:13 is a tremendous balance in how God's Spirit works in you in order to produce a spiritual life as you interact with him — I call it "interactionism" rather than cooperation, but an interaction with him. He initiates it, and you respond. You don't manipulate him in any way. You don't persuade him. You don't intercourse him. You don't have to obligate him in any way. It is a response — not a reaction — a *response* to what God is working in you... So, the best way to look at it is to think of God the Spirit providing the power; we don't provide the power, but we present the willingness. As we present the willingness, he provides the power by which we can follow what God expects of us. So, the Spirit of God works in us, he provides the power, he inspires the will, he allows us to be responsive enough so when we present the willingness, his prescriptions, his expectations, his claims are accomplished. So, we present the willingness; we don't *provide* the willingness. He works in us, but he provides the power because we don't have any power.

Dr. Uche Anizor

Paul in Philippians 2 speaks to the Philippians, exhorting to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. Then he says, here's why and here's how: "because God is at work in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." So, what does he mean by "God is at work in you"? Two things. The Spirit is the one that enables us to actually will, to want to do the very things that God commands. And so, this is a strong emphasis on God's action, that it's God that enables a believer to do his will, but it's not only that God the Spirit enables us *to want* to do these things, God the Spirit enables us to actually carry them out. So, this is what Paul is meaning when he says the Spirit is at work, or God is at work in us to will and to act. It's the "both/and," that from start to finish the Spirit is the primary reason why we actually are able to act. And so, the exhortation, "work out your salvation with fear and

trembling,” isn’t Paul saying work out your salvation, pull up your boot straps, and do it all by yourself. It’s Paul saying you can work it out; you’re not a victim. You can work it out because the Spirit is already at work in you, enabling you to want and to fulfill your want.

Question 12:

Is sanctification solely a work of the Holy Spirit, or do believers play a role as well?

Dr. Dan Lacich

When it comes to growing in holiness — “sanctification” — this is really a process that is a cooperative effort between us as followers of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. There really is a “both/and” that’s involved in all of this. You know, on the one hand, you have the Holy Spirit does work to, in incredible ways by his power, change us and cleanse us and make us more holy. I think back on when I first came to Christ I had a fairly foul mouth. I came to Christ and that seemed to disappear almost overnight, without any effort on my part. And I look at that as the work of the Holy Spirit graciously removing that from me. Yet, at the same time, Paul says to the Philippians that we need to work out or to work *at* our salvation with fear and trembling. He says it in the same context of, “he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion.” So, there’s this ongoing sense the Holy Spirit is working, the Holy Spirit will sanctify us, but we also need to put in the effort, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to be disciplined and make that happen. Growing in holiness is not a passive thing. We can’t just sit back and say, “Oh well, you know, the Holy Spirit didn’t clean up my life yet.” But at the same time, we can’t do it all on our own. There has to be this cooperative relationship of relying on the Holy Spirit, yet being as diligent as we can with perseverance to press ahead, knowing that we’re also only able to do it because of the Holy Spirit.

Rev. Mike Osborne

Unlike justification, which is solely the work of God upon our hearts, sanctification is a work of both the Holy Spirit and the believer. We cooperate with the Holy Spirit. In the New Testament, for example, again and again... Let’s take the letters of Paul. He begins normally in letters telling us what God has done, and then he moves into the second part of his letter, telling us what we must do. And in some of those second sections of his letters, it’s really obvious that we have a role to play in our sanctification. For instance, in Ephesians Paul tells us to put to death our old nature. That’s our responsibility. We must put off the old “me,” I must put off the old “me” that I used to be, turn away from sin in repentant faith toward God, and put on the new self, which has been created to be like God in holiness and righteousness. Paul says in Philippians, for example, that we must work out our salvation with fear and trembling. That’s our role. But we do so in hope and with confidence because it is God who works in us both to will and do his good pleasure. So, there’s definitely a cooperative role. We obey, we respond to God’s law, we pursue God, we turn away

from the past like Paul says ... the old has gone, the new has come; I'm a new creation. In Romans 8, the work that God has done in us is made real clear by the fact that we are raised with Christ to newness of life, but in the rest of Romans Paul says to no longer be conformed to the pattern of this world. So, there's that cooperative effort — the Holy Spirit giving us the energy, the identity, the indicative of who we are in Christ, and then we live out and obey the imperatives that we are given to do in the Scriptures.

Dr. Uche Anizor

Sanctification is both the work of the Holy Spirit and believers. So, on the one hand, we want to affirm that it's only God who makes us holy. God, the Holy God, is the only one who can sanctify us. On the other hand, you encounter much of the New Testament's teaching and, for instance, you read Colossians 3 and Paul exhorts the believers to put to death, right? Put to death. This is the language of moral effort or spiritual effort. They have to do something. In 2 Peter, the author says God has given everything that we need to live a godly life in Christ Jesus. So, God has given us everything that we need, but then the exhortation, then, is add to your faith all these things culminating in love. And so, we can see that sanctification, this process of becoming more and more reflective of who Jesus is requires a "both/and." It's recognizing that God is at work in us to will and to act according to his good purpose, recognizing that we can only act according to his good purpose because God is at work in us, but at the same time, there's work. We need to work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

Question 13:

How does the Spirit intercede for us in our prayers?

Dr. Mark Saucy

The Spirit's intercession for us in prayer is something we meet in that language in Romans 8:26-27, and that's where it concretely says that we, in our weakness, we need an ally. And that's where our weakness... We don't know how to pray as we should, and our ally, our Helper, our mediator, the Holy Spirit, is the one who intercedes for us with, and it says, "groanings that are too deep for words." When we understand what's going on there in that passage, the context is one of universal problem. It is a problem that all believers have. We all groan. We all suffer. We are all persecuted. And the Spirit, in prayer, is the answer to that condition. That starts up in verse 18. And so, he's an answer to weakness, and I think that the issue is what happens in the next verse about his searching the heart. I think the Spirit is the one there who is searching the heart, and he is at the level of where I groan, where I don't have words to put onto my experience, my impressions, my feelings. I know in my life that I'm not yet where I need to be as far as heaven is, and "this world is not my home" type of thing... And so, it is the Spirit who searches me and helps me in this time, and I think that he establishes a dialogue in prayer, and I think it's important that we be open to prayer as dialogue here. It's not me informing God, surely. He

doesn't need information from me about what my circumstances are that I might pray about, but it is a picture of relationship. I tell him what my heart is, even my laments and my heartaches, the hard things, even accusations I might have against him in my pain.

Dr. Simon Vibert

In Romans 8 it speaks about the Holy Spirit interceding for us in our prayers. There's a section in Romans 8 from verse 18 onwards where it speaks about groaning, so there's the groaning creation waiting for the fulfillment of God's work, there's the groaning Christian under the weight of suffering, and there's also the groaning Holy Spirit within us. And in verse 26 we read this:

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 with groans that words cannot express (Romans 8:26).

It's a wonderful passage that speaks about the fact that our prayer, whilst a wonderful privilege, is also frail; we don't always know what to pray for or how to pray, but the Holy Spirit himself intercedes with and alongside us, so that as we pray he is praying too and groaning and empathizing with us.

Pastor Pierre Bitar (translation)

I think that the Holy Spirit intercedes for us in our prayers. There is a verse mentioned in Romans 8:26, "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." I think we, as believers and as human beings, do not know how to pray as we ought, and we need help from the Holy Spirit, because he is the one who helps me. He is the one who supports me. He is the one who speaks for me in prayer. He intercedes for us and speaks for believers "with groanings too deep for words." Sometimes I don't have the words — the words that agree with the heart of God — in my prayers. So, the Holy Spirit intercedes for me. The Holy Spirit speaks and gives me the words, and he prays for me, and through me for the people. He prays through me in order to pray the prayer that agrees with the heart of God.

Question 14:

How does the Holy Spirit enable us to persevere in the faith?

Dr. Simon Vibert

The Holy Spirit enables us to persevere in the faith by giving us the resources we need to continue in loving Jesus and keeping going till the end. We have a personal relationship with the living God, and we know God truly by the Holy Spirit indwelling us, conforming us to the likeness of Christ and ensuring that those who truly grasp the Christian faith will continue until the end.

Dr. Gregg R. Allison

Peter, in 1 Peter 1:5, says that we are being “protected by the power of God through [our] faith for a salvation [that is] ready to be revealed in the last times.” And so, God is powerfully working through the Spirit, I believe, to hold us in Christ. But that doesn’t, that powerful work of God doesn’t operate apart from our faith but through our faith. And we learn elsewhere in Scripture that it’s the Holy Spirit who grants us faith. And so, as we go through the trials and tribulations, the persecutions of our life, the Spirit is our resource providing everything that we need, especially faith, to be able to engage with the powerful working God so that we will indeed persevere in Christ. And when we face persecutions, and we don’t know how to act or even what to say, we have the promise of Jesus that the Holy Spirit will give us the words to face our time of persecution in a proper way that will honor God. So, the Spirit gives us resources, faith, even words to testify to Jesus Christ. As we march through this pilgrimage on earth towards heaven, he preserves us in faith in Jesus Christ.

Dr. John McKinley

One of the things that the Holy Spirit does is he supports us and helps us to persevere in the faith. We know from Romans 8 that he cries out with our spirit that we are children of God. He also prays for us, and we are to pray in the Spirit. So, he’s closely involved with our spiritual life. And I think we can see implied that in Romans 8:28 that God works all things together for our good, and in context of the chapter, that’s especially focusing on negative things that we are experiencing. And the Holy Spirit is going to have the role to help us understand that these negative things we are experiencing are God’s works in us to propel us in sanctification. So, this fits with the larger idea of the Holy Spirit assuring us that we belong to God, that he is working out good things in us. And if we are open to his leading and his reminder of these things from Scripture, we can hang in the faith even when things get dark, knowing that God is meeting with us and that God is strengthening us by it and that there is a good purpose here. And so, that is the Holy Spirit’s role, to constantly be with us and be a comfort and assurance and encouragement and give us the confidence that this is not for nothing, that God is in control, and he’s doing good to us in it.

Question 15:**What will the future glorification of our bodies be like?****Dr. Charles L. Quarles**

I would like to clear up a very important misunderstanding about the nature of our resurrected and glorified bodies that’s based on a confused interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15. I have encountered many believers who read Paul’s phrase “spiritual body” and assume from that that the resurrection body will be immaterial, that it will be nonphysical. And that’s not actually what Paul is teaching. There are two different terms for spiritual in New Testament Greek, one that means “made of” or “composed of” spirit, and the other that means “adapted to” the spirit. And it’s this latter term that Paul uses here. He’s not saying that our resurrection-glorified bodies will be *made of*

spirit, but that they will be perfectly adapted to the Spirit. What does he mean by that? Well, right now our physical bodies suffer the consequences and corruption of the Fall, and although we have been spiritually renewed, this body still has sinful longings. It wants to pursue pleasures that are forbidden, and so forth. And as long as we are in this body, we suffer that battle between flesh and spirit that Paul so frequently describes. But in the resurrection and glorification, the bodies that we receive will be perfectly adapted to the Spirit's control. All traces of our corruption will be removed from the physical body so that this battle that we're constantly engaged in now will at last be over. I long for that day.

Dr. Gregg R. Allison

Paul, in Romans 8:11, affirms that it will be the Holy Spirit who will powerfully work to give us our new glorified resurrection bodies. It will be the responsibility of the Spirit to provide that last step of our salvation. What will our bodies be like as glorified resurrected bodies? Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15 describes our resurrection bodies using four words. First, they'll be *imperishable*; they'll never wear out, they will never die. Secondly, they will be *glorious*, perhaps shining because of our full conformity to the image of Jesus Christ. They also will be *strong* and powerful, not in the sense of superhuman, but strong as we human beings, as embodied beings should be. And our bodies will also be *spiritual*, not immaterial, but completely dominated and controlled by the Holy Spirit. So, our great future hope is that we will be fully conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, we will have new resurrection, glorified bodies through the Spirit, and these bodies will be imperishable, glorious, strong, and dominated by the Holy Spirit.

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