

Series: The Gift of the Holy Spirit

Apostolic Testimony in 2 Corinthians and Galatians

December 4, 2022

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Five apostles attest to the Holy Spirit: Paul, Peter, James, Jude, and John. Last week we did an overview and began looking at Paul's testimony to the Holy Spirit in his letters to the Corinthians.

In 2 Corinthians, Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit's work in the true believer. The Holy Spirit is a pledge of salvation and gives assurance of the participation of God's love. 2 Cor. 1: 20, 21. Cf 2 Cor. 5:5

And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. 2 Cor. 1:20, 21 ESV

We need to remember that the efficacy of the Holy Spirit is distinctly different from the preaching of the gospel. The Holy Spirit influences the heart of the believer apart from the mere moral influence of the Word of God. Someone can preach and preach and preach and teach the Word of God, but unless the Holy Spirit works in the heart to turn it and works in eyes and ears to open them, the witness goes out, but it is not the same as the saving act of Christ applied to a person by the Holy Spirit.

noun: **efficacy**

the ability to produce a desired or intended result.

"there is little information on the efficacy of this treatment"

synonyms: effectiveness, success, productiveness, potency, power;

Paul founded the Corinthian Church. He speaks of being united with them in Christ. He talks about their being anointed as a royal priesthood to make a common confession of Christianity. Christ is the Anointed One; so also, the believer is anointed. This implies something more than mere instruction through the Word of God. It is an unction for priestly service. It is the Holy Spirit who seals us, implying that believers bear a seal or impress from God. This seal is there to assure the believer of belonging to Christ and also to mark him/her as belonging to Christ. God's seal is on the believer; every believer is God's property.

Likewise, God gave believers the earnest of the Spirit in their hearts. The term translated "earnest" is used three times in the NT in reference to the Holy Spirit. It denotes a pledge of something further to be conferred, like a down payment or security deposit. The Holy Spirit thus produces certain effects on the heart. The Holy Spirit is able to produce a desired or intended result in the believer. He is effective, successful, powerful, and productive. So we need to learn to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the sanctification process!

2 Cor. 3:1-6: You are declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink; but with the Spirit of the living God. (3:3)

¹Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? ²You yourselves are our letter, inscribed on our hearts, known and read by everyone. ³It is clear that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

⁴Such confidence before God is ours through Christ. ⁵Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim that anything comes from us, but our competence comes from God. ⁶And He has qualified us as ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. 2 Cor. 3:1-6 BSB

Corinth was a large flourishing community and the church Paul founded there demonstrated his apostleship. Paul says here that the Corinthian believers were letters, not written with ink, but with the Spirit of the Living God. It takes the Holy Spirit to understand revelation. Notice that Paul distinguishes his ministry from the writing of the Spirit. If Paul has been effective in ministry, it is due to the Holy Spirit. Also, Paul talks here about the Holy Spirit's influence in effecting the spiritual renewal of the heart as contrasted with the Old Covenant, which was written on tablets of stone.

Believers are God's letters for all to read. Others should "read" us and see the testimony of the work of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, in our lives. We are also letters that reflect the ministry of those who pastor us, teach us, train us, and pray for us. Paul said that the Corinthians were his letters of recommendation, letters from Christ to be seen by all, letters written with the Spirit of the Living God.

Galatians. Paul's gospel was readily accepted in Galatia and had been accompanied with the miraculous ministration of the Spirit and with attesting displays of power (Gal. 3:3-5). The Galatians had begun in the Spirit. But now, Paul wondered who had bewitched them. They were falling for false teachings from false teachers.

The Pharisaic party had sent people into their ranks demanding that Christians from the ranks of the Gentiles should observe Jewish rites as necessary to justification before God. They were saying that the doctrine of Christ, or believing in Christ alone for salvation in order to be justified by God freely by grace was off; such folks needed to DO something. That something was to be circumcised, a ceremony in the Old Covenant system that was required by all males to indicate that they were included in the covenant community of God. Paul said, "No."

In Galatians 3:3 Paul shows that these Galatian believers had not received the Spirit by the works of the law but by the message or preaching of faith. This is the Holy Spirit, with all His gifts, as promised by the prophets. These gifts include the saving gifts of regeneration and holiness as well as the supernatural gifts. These were not received by the performance of some action of the ceremonial or moral law, but by the Spirit by means of the message of faith. The law is there to convict of sin and give the fear of wrath. Jesus said so Himself. (John 16:5-11)

“I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. ⁵But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ ⁶But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. ⁷Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; ¹¹concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. John 16:-11 ESV

The promised Spirit was procured by nothing less than the vicarious death of Christ. This is Paul’s answer to legalism. In Gal. 3:14 Paul connects the giving of the Spirit with the atonement. The death of Christ was the meritorious cause or purchase of this great gift—the promised Spirit. Christ merited this gift which He gives to us, namely the Holy Spirit. Giving the Holy Spirit as promised was and is the consequence of all that Jesus Christ did on behalf of those for whom He died as Surety of the New Covenant in His blood, as Messiah, as Mediator, as Infinite God-Man.

¹⁰For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.” ¹¹Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.” ¹²But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.” ¹³Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”— ¹⁴so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith. Galatians 3: 10-14 ESV

The giving of the Holy Spirit, the gift of the Holy Spirit, wholly excludes the works of law. Nothing a human being did or does can earn or merit this gift. The true believer receives a gift, the promise of the Spirit, through faith. The Holy Spirit is the Promise of the Father. He is the life-giving Spirit, the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

The Spirit of the Son, the Spirit of adoption, is given only to those who are sons by faith and partakers of the atonement (Gal. 4:6) The Holy Spirit is not received by the works of the law. The OT system was one of “do this and you will live.” The law showed man his sin and that he fell short of the glory of God. But way back in Genesis 3:15, God had promised a savior, a Messiah, a way back to Himself. Those who believed the promise and what God promised for their salvation were saved. Life is in the Spirit. Only the Holy Spirit gives life. The Law cannot give life. Trace the grace and follow the promise.

The last part of Galatians focuses on the graces of the Holy Spirit and the believer’s fruitfulness. Paul says to stand fast in the liberty of the believer. The Holy Spirit renews and sanctifies. We through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. (Gal. 5:5). Paul contrasts flesh and Spirit and the war between them. Whenever one is walking in the flesh or operating in the flesh, one is at war with the Holy Spirit. Believers can be identified by the fruit of the Holy Spirit; all character qualities. So the nature of a person reflects what is inside that person. Their actions will reflect their words and thoughts which reflect the intent of the heart. Galatians 5:16-25; 6:8.

Paul found his sufficiency of strength, the inspiration and rule of his conduct, in the grace of Christ. Do we believe that we are being established, anointed, sealed, and having the earnest of the Spirit? The Law is spiritual and has its letter; the gospel also has its letter. It is the Spirit that gives life. Do we sense the unity Paul sensed among true believers in the Spirit? True believers partake of the anointing. 1 Cor. 1:6, 10; 2:3; 4:5, 10-12, 15; 2 Cor. 6:11; 7:3.

2 Corinthians 3:3. "The Holy Spirit uses the tongue of His minister as His pen." Andrew Murray. The Holy Spirit is needed and waits to do the work; we need to maintain a right relation to Him. (Acts 18:5-11; 1 Cor. 2:3) As the flesh, the world, and self, with its life and strength are broken down, and the flesh has nothing to glory in, the Spirit will work.

From chapter 4 of 2 Corinthians, we learn that Christ needed to be made perfect through suffering. (Heb. 2:10) He was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. (2 Cor. 13:4)

⁴For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but in dealing with you we will live with him by the power of God. 2 Corinthians 13:4 ESV

As believers experience the fellowship of Christ's suffering and weakness, so also do they experience His power and Spirit. What is it to make way for Christ's Power to work and to thus depend upon His Spirit? Andrew Murray says that a sense of something supernatural, a holy fear of God's presence resting on us, and the self-evidencing power of the actual presence of the Holy Spirit mark the Ministry of the Spirit.

When the soul yields to the temptation of the sensible (tangible senses), it breaks away from the rule of the Spirit and comes under the power of the body—it becomes flesh and is not only without the Spirit, but hostile to Him. God is Spirit and gives Spirit. We cannot protect in the flesh what was begun in the Spirit. Christ is the Wisdom and Power of God. Christ fulfilled His promise to send the Holy Spirit to dwell in believers in order to obey Him and do the will of the Father. Galatians 3:3 and Philipians 3:3, 4.

Justification by faith is only the beginning; believers are to walk by the Spirit of God. In Galatians 5:16-26, we find that the flesh is at war against the Holy Spirit. The works of the flesh are contrasted with the fruit of the Spirit. One list contains behaviors and the other contains character qualities.

¹⁶But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ¹⁸But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

²⁵If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. Galatians 5:16-26 ESV

Finally, the Apostles state as fact the cross work of Christ as the ground of justification; right standing before God in Christ. They also stress the “gift of the Spirit as the source of a new life, a new disposition and walk, in which both the impression and the expression of God’s law is to be seen.” Andrew Murray.

From Romans 8:1, 2; John 7:39; and Galatians 3:13, 14, we see that faith is used in connection with Abraham. Believing God gave Abraham strength for obedience and thus please God. Abraham took God at His Word. The faith that centers on the inheritance is the attitude of soul which waits for God Himself to speak His Word and then to do the thing God has spoken.

We watch for God’s Presence in order to do His Will. We look for, wait, and expect God to fulfill His promises. Abraham waited a very long time to see God’s promise fulfilled. (John 8:56, e.g.)

“The Spirit is called in 1 Peter 1:21 the incorruptible seed, because He is cast into the soul with the Word, as its prolific virtue; the Word is the seed materially, but the Spirit is the seed virtually.” Thomas Goodwin.

Can we say, “I bear within me the living Seed of the Life of God”? Amen.

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