

1. The Holy Spirit at Work in the Believer

The Holy Spirit in the Believer

Warm-up question: How did you come to be interested in spiritual things? Was it through teaching you received in your childhood, a book that you read, or a spiritual experience that you had?

An Example of the Spirit Using a Man

⁶Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” ⁷He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. **⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses** in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:6-8 Emphasis mine).

Charles Grandison Finney was a man much used of God during the Great Awakening, a period of spiritual revival in the 1830s, mostly situated on the east coast of the United States. Under his preaching, he was said to have led more than a million people to Christ. Before his work as a revivalist and preacher, he was pursuing a career in law until the question of the salvation of his soul came to his mind. He had been attending a very traditional church. The speaker was not inspirational or dynamic.

Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit started nudging his soul as to where he would spend eternity. He decided that he would make his peace with God and resolved to avoid all business until he was assured of his salvation. The following experience of his spiritual rebirth and of being filled with the Spirit was written in his autobiography. It is very interesting to note how the Holy Spirit worked in his life in this instance:

“Tuesday night I had become very nervous, and in the night a strange feeling came over me as if I was about to die. I knew that if I did, I should sink down to hell, but I quieted myself as best I could until morning. At an early hour, I started for the office. But just before I arrived at the office, something seemed to confront me with questions like these: indeed, it seemed as if the inquiry was within me, as if an inward voice said to me, “What are you waiting for? Did you not promise to give your heart to God? And what are you trying to do? Are you endeavoring to work out a righteousness of your own?” Just at this point, the whole question of Gospel salvation opened to my mind in a manner most marvelous to me at the time. I think I then saw, as clearly as I ever have in my life, the reality and fullness of the atonement of Christ. I saw that His work was a finished work; and that instead of having, or needing, any righteousness of my own to recommend me to God, I had to submit myself to the righteousness of God through Christ.

Gospel salvation seemed to me to be an offer of something to be accepted; and that it was full and complete; and that all that was necessary on my part, was to get my own consent to give up my sins, and accept Christ. Salvation, it seemed to me, instead of being a thing to be wrought out, by my own works, was a thing to be found entirely in the Lord Jesus Christ, who presented Himself before me as my God and my Savior. Without being distinctly aware of it, I had stopped in the street right where the inward voice seemed to arrest me. How long I remained in that

position, I cannot say. But after this distinct revelation had stood for some little time before my mind, the question seemed to be put, "Will you accept it now, today?" I replied, "Yes; I will accept it today, or I will die in the attempt." North of the village, and over a hill, lay a piece of woods, in which I was in the almost daily habit of walking, more or less, when it was pleasant weather. It was now October, and the time was past for my frequent walks there. Nevertheless, instead of going to the office, I turned and bent my course toward the woods, feeling that I must be alone, and away from all human eyes and ears, so that I could pour out my prayer to God.

The thought was pressing me of the rashness of my promise, that I would give my heart to God that day or die in the attempt. It seemed to me as if that was binding upon my soul. A great sinking and discouragement came over me, and I felt almost too weak to stand upon my knees. Just at this moment I again thought I heard someone approach me, and I opened my eyes to see whether it was so. But right there the revelation of my pride of heart, as the great difficulty that stood in the way, was distinctly shown to me. An overwhelming sense of my wickedness in being ashamed to have a human being see me on my knees before God, took such powerful possession of me, that I cried at the top of my voice, and exclaimed that I would not leave that place if all the men on earth and all the devils in hell surrounded me. "What!" I said, "such a degraded sinner I am, on my knees, confessing my sins to the great and holy God; and ashamed to have any human being, and a sinner like myself, find me on my knees endeavoring to make my peace with my offended God!" The sin appeared awful, infinite. It broke me down before the Lord.

Just at that point, this passage of Scripture seemed to drop into my mind with a flood of light: "Then shall ye go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. Then shall ye seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13). I instantly seized hold of this with my heart. I had intellectually believed the Bible before but never had the truth been in my mind that faith was a voluntary trust instead of an intellectual state. I was as conscious as I was of my existence, of trusting at that moment in God's veracity. Somehow I knew that that was a passage of Scripture, though I do not think I had ever read it. I knew that it was God's word, and God's voice, that spoke to me. I cried to Him, "Lord, I take thee at thy word. Now thou knowest that I do search for thee with all my heart, and that I have come here to pray to thee; and thou hast promised to hear me."

That seemed to settle the question that I could then, that day, perform my vow. The Spirit seemed to lay stress upon that idea in the text, "When you search for me with all your heart." The question of when, that is of the present time, seemed to fall heavily into my heart. I told the Lord that I should take him at his word; that he could not lie; and that therefore I was sure that he heard my prayer, and that he would be found of me."

Later on, back in his office, he tried to get back into the state of being concerned for his soul, he was not aware that God had taken him at his word and that he was now a Christian. Again, in his own words, he says:

"I could not be anxious at all about my soul, and about my spiritual state. The repose of my mind was unspeakably great. I never can describe it in words. The thought of God was sweet to my mind, and the most profound spiritual tranquility had taken full possession of me. This was a

great mystery, but it did not distress or perplex me. I went to my dinner and found I had no appetite to eat. I then went to the office and found that Squire W— had gone to dinner. I took down my bass-viol, and, as I was accustomed to doing, began to play and sing some pieces of sacred music. But as soon as I started to sing those sacred words, I began to weep. It seemed as if my heart was all liquid, and my feelings were in such a state that I could not hear my own voice in singing without causing my sensibility to overflow. I wondered at this and tried to suppress my tears, but could not. After trying in vain to contain my tears, I put up my instrument and stopped singing.

Just before evening the thought took possession of my mind, that as soon as I was left alone in the new office, I would try to pray again — that I was not going to abandon the subject of religion and give it up, at any rate; and therefore, although I no longer had any concern about my soul, still I would continue to pray. Just at dark Squire W—, seeing that everything was adjusted, bade me goodnight and went to his home. I had accompanied him to the door; and as I closed the door and turned around, my heart seemed to be liquid within me. All my feelings seemed to rise and flow out; and the utterance of my heart was, “I want to pour my whole soul out to God.” The rising of my soul was so great that I rushed into the room back of the front office, to pray. There was no fire, and no light in the room; nevertheless, it appeared to me as if it were perfectly light. As I went in and shut the door after me, it seemed as if I met the Lord Jesus Christ face to face. It did not occur to me then, nor did it for some time afterward that it was wholly a mental state.

On the contrary, it seemed to me that I saw him as I would see any other man. He said nothing but looked at me in such a manner as to break me right down at his feet. I have always since regarded this as a most remarkable state of mind; for it seemed to me a reality, that he stood before me, and I fell at his feet and poured out my soul to him. I wept aloud like a child and made such confessions as I could with my choked utterance. It seemed to me that I bathed his feet with my tears; and yet I had no distinct impression that I touched him, that I recollect.

I must have continued in this state for a good while, but my mind was too much absorbed with the interview to recollect anything that I said. But I know, as soon as my mind became calm enough to break off from the conversation, I returned to the front office and found that the fire that I had made of large wood was nearly burned out. But as I turned and was about to take a seat by the fire, I received a mighty baptism of the Holy Ghost.

Without any expectation of it, without ever having the thought in my mind that there was any such thing for me, without any recollection that I had ever heard the thing mentioned by any person in the world, the Holy Spirit descended upon me in a manner that seemed to go through me, body and soul. I could feel the impression, like a wave of electricity, going through and through me. Indeed, it seemed to come in waves and waves of liquid love for I could not express it in any other way. It seemed like the very breath of God. I can recollect distinctly that it seemed to fan me, like immense wings. No words can express the wonderful love that was shed abroad in my heart. I wept aloud with joy and love; and I do not know, but I should say, I bellowed out the unutterable gushings of my heart. These waves came over me, and over me, and over me, one after the other, until I recollect, I cried out, “I shall die if these waves continue to pass over me.” I said, “Lord, I cannot bear any more;” yet I had no fear of death.

How long I continued in this state, with this baptism continuing to roll over me and go through me, I do not know. But I know it was late in the evening when a member of my choir — for I was the leader of the choir — came into the office to see me. He was a member of the church. He found me in this state of loud weeping, and said to me, “Mr. Finney, what ails you?” I could make him no answer for some time. He then said, “Are you in pain?” I gathered myself up as best I could, and replied, “No, but so happy that I cannot live.”¹

What things speak to you from the above testimony?

Finney's experience was a very powerful one. He went on to serve the Lord in a mighty and self-sacrificial way. Everyone has their own story, and no two experiences are the same. However, we will always see that things are different in a person's life when the Spirit of God takes the throne of his or her life. Often a person's inner being or heart is moved with compassion over things that before conversion or being filled with the Spirit did not bother him or her. When this internal change came to me, I remember that soon after my conversion to Christ, I was walking along the street of my hometown, having feelings of compassion for the people around me. I now see this as the Holy Spirit's influence in my heart. My one goal in those early days of my Christian experience was to be able to speak on the streets to people about Christ. I wanted to talk to anyone that would listen. I wanted to speak not only to my friends but others who were interested in spiritual things.

I went to London and spoke in Hyde Park at Speaker's Corner. I also went with my wife, Sandy, through France, Spain, and Portugal with teams of other young people. We spoke publicly and also performed drama skits and told the message of Christ through songs and different creative ways of expression, doing anything to draw a crowd and share the gospel. Within four years, my wife and I were church planting with a couple of friends by multiplying Small Groups in my hometown. My marijuana and drug habit that had got me into such trouble in my teen years no longer had any hold over me. There was a new power at work in my life that enabled me to conquer my old habits and has control and discipline in my life, which I had not been able to do before.

What about you? Is there an area of your life that has become a mountain before you that cannot be removed? God has promised you power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you (Acts 1:8). It has been my experience as a pastor and church planter to see many living the Christian life on their own spiritual resources, instead of seeking for God to come and give them His power and ability to live the life that they cannot live on their own without His help. There should be a remarkable difference in our lives when the Spirit takes up residence in our hearts. The secret which I am still learning myself is to live in dependence on God. Jesus said, “**Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4).**” Jesus is saying that that which feeds our physical bodies will not fulfill us, but that which our spirit needs. We are fed spiritually by the living word that comes to our heart prompted by the Spirit. Recognizing and being sensitive to the Spirit's inner promptings brings about this kind of life. We are to be spiritually sensitive to Him by having a heart that will listen to the Spirit and obey Him.

¹ <http://www.godrules.net/library/finney/finney.htm>

The Spirit of God at Work

What can happen when a group of people is filled with the Spirit of God and start to listen and obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit? Well, let's find out how Finney's life impacted the community. After his salvation and filling with the Spirit, he resolved to give up his law practice to the essential thing in the world, the salvation of those that do not yet know God. The Spirit of God seemed to stay with him in great power as he went from village to village preaching the Word of God. When he spoke about Christ, people would fall on the floor under a great conviction of spirit, crying for God to have mercy on their souls. There seemed to be a unique presence over the area where he would be preaching. He says of one time:

"The state of things in the village and the surrounding area was such that no one could come into the village without feeling awestruck with the impression that God was there in a peculiar way. As an example of this, I will relate a particular incident. The sheriff of the county resided in Utica. There were two courthouses in the county, one in Rome and the other in Utica (New York State).

Consequently, the sheriff, Bryant by name, came to Rome quite frequently. He later told me that he had heard of the state of things at Rome, and he, together with many others in Utica, had laughed a great deal about it. One day it was necessary for him to come to Rome. He said that he was glad to have business there, for he wanted to see for himself what things were really like. He was driving in his one-horse sleigh, without any particular impression in his mind at all, until he crossed what was called the old canal, a place about a mile from the town. He said as soon as he passed over the canal, a strange impression came over him, awe so deep that he could not shake it. He felt as if God permeated the whole atmosphere. He said that this feeling increased the entire way until he came into the village. Bryant stopped at Mr. Franklin's hotel, and the stable-man came and took his horse. He observed that the stable-man looked just like he felt—as if he were afraid to speak. He went into the hotel and found the gentleman there with whom he had business. He said that they were both so obviously shaken that they could hardly attend to business. He reported that several times in the course of the short time he was there, he had to rise from the table abruptly and go to the window and look away, trying to divert his attention to keep from weeping. He saw that everyone else appeared to feel just as he did. Such awe, such solemnness, such a state of things he had never had any conception of before. He quickly concluded his business and returned to Utica—but (as he said later) never to speak lightly of the Spirit's work in Rome again. A few weeks later in Utica, when Finney traveled to that town, he himself was converted."²

In this long introduction, we have an honest account of the way the Spirit came to a man, convicting him of sin and purifying him before using him significantly to the benefit and salvation of many lives. God hasn't changed; He wants to do the same today. The Spirit-filled Finney in a different way than what many people experience. That is His prerogative. He will come in different ways to different people. He will not ask or require the same thing of everyone. I trust that in these six weeks of talks we will experience more of the Spirit of God than we have experienced up until now. We need this same power of the Holy Spirit more than ever in the days we live. When our hearts overflow with the presence of Christ, others around us will

² Autobiography of Charles G. Finney, published by Fleming H. Revel Company.

observe the power of God and become spiritually hungry themselves. When we have a hunger and thirst for God Himself, this will cause a chain reaction in those around us. This unique presence of God is what revival is. He is looking for people who are committed and open to His Spirit moving in the midst.

For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him (2 Chronicles 16:9).

Business, as usual, is not enough for the multitudes that do not have a relationship with God. I am convinced that God is looking for whole congregations to pour out their lives in dedication for the salvation of those that have yet to find Christ. Do you know that it was not until 1830 that the population of the earth managed to reach 1 Billion people? From that point, it took 130 years to add the second billion to planet Earth. We are well over a population of 7 Billion here in 2012 and increasing by a billion approximately every eight years. If God would visit in revival in the days of Charles Finney, Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley, and George Whitfield, why would he not visit us in power in our day? More than half the amount of people who have ever lived are now alive.³ Because of the population increase, if we don't have a move of the Spirit and a visitation of God in our day, more people will go to a lost eternity without God than in all previous generations put together. I can't see God allowing that to happen.

Do we believe what the Bible tells us about eternal life, and about heaven and hell? If whole communities can be brought to Christ in the 1830s, why would God not do the same now with your city? If God so loved the eastern United States that he would visit in power in the 1830s, why not now when there are 6 billion people more than in Finney's day? Our faith and expectation of God's power at work through us needs to be strengthened and exercised. Faith is like a muscle; it needs to be fed and exercised. That is what I hope we can do together over these six weeks.

What Does the Bible say Concerning the Coming of the Holy Spirit?

¹⁷" In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. ¹⁸Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. ¹⁹I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. ²⁰The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. ²¹And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved' (Acts 2:17-21).

What things should we be expecting God to fulfill according to this passage of scripture?

Who is the Holy Spirit and What Does He do?

What is your concept of the Holy Spirit?

³ John Dawson, Taking Your Cities For God, Page 65, Word Publishing.

Some have the concept in their mind that the Spirit is some ‘force that is with us,’ that He is ethereal and not personal. This concept is opposite to how the Bible reveals the Spirit to be. God, the Holy Spirit, is very much a person, having character qualities just like the other persons of the Godhead.

Jewish people have rejected the doctrine of the Trinity, saying that there is only one God. However, even in the Old Testament, they would find scriptures that would support the idea of the Trinity and in particular the person of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is mentioned more than 90 times in the Old Testament and 260 times in the New Testament. Jewish people reject the idea that God exists as three persons and will proclaim from the Old Testament the critical verse that they first learn in the Holy Scriptures:

⁴Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength (Deuteronomy 6:4-5 Emphasis mine).

When I was living in Israel, I learned more about this important scripture and how there are two Hebrew words for “one.” The word that is translated ‘one’ is what is known as a compound-unity noun, the word is *echad*, a word that describes oneness or unity but at the same time contains several entities. For instance, it is used to describe the cluster of grapes that the spies returned to the camp with:

That place was called the Valley of Eshcol because of the cluster of grapes the Israelites cut off there (Numbers 13:24).

The word “cluster” is our word *echad*, in this context many existing in one. In the book of Ezra, we see something similar: ⁶⁴The whole company numbered 42,360 (Ezra 2:64), again we find our word *echad* translated as the “whole company.” When God wanted to indicate the number one and only one, He used a different word, the word *yachid*. This word is used to describe Abraham’s one and only son, which inherited the promises, the one that, as a test of his faith, he was told to sacrifice on Mount Moriah:

²Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about" (Genesis 22:2 Emphasis mine).

The word “only” is our word *yachid*. The Tri-unity of God is explicitly taught in the Bible. If God wanted to communicate that He is one and only one in the Godhead, He would have used the word *yachid*, instead, in this key verse God is not just one but three persons in the one.

We see in the very first chapter of the Bible, the book of Genesis, a reference to the Spirit brooding or hovering over the waters:

¹In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ²Now 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).

The Spirit was clearly at work with the Godhead in the creation of the earth bringing order out of the chaos in the beginning. He hasn't changed. God, the Holy Spirit, is still able to bring order out of the chaos of your life if you are going through trials and difficulties. He is looking to bring peace to your heart in the midst of what you are going through. All He needs is for you to ask Him.

Still, in that first chapter of Genesis, we see the plurality of the Godhead by the use of the words "us" and "our."

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule..." (Genesis 1:26 Emphasis mine).

Let's look at another passage that speaks of the Spirit of God from the Old Testament:

In this Old Testament passage, who are the Persons involved?

¹⁶"Come near me and listen to this: "From the first announcement I have not spoken in secret; at the time it happens, I am there." And now the Sovereign LORD has sent me, with his Spirit. ¹⁷This is what the LORD says— your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go (Isaiah 48:16-17).

The three persons of the Godhead are mentioned in this one Old Testament passage together. The Sovereign Lord (the Father), the Redeemer (The one who is speaking is the Son), and the Spirit.

How Does the Holy Spirit Help Us?

Let's look at one or two more passages of God the Holy Spirit at work in the Old Testament. Let's turn to the book of Judges, chapter 16:

³But Samson lay there only until the middle of the night. Then he got up and took hold of the doors of the city gate, together with the two posts, and tore them loose, bar and all. He lifted them to his shoulders and carried them to the top of the hill that faces Hebron (Judges 16:3).

When you think of Samson, what picture of him comes to mind?

Do you think of this considerable hulk-like person carrying off the gates of the city up to the top of the hill? (Judges 16:3). How big and heavy would the gates and posts of a city be? I know that this will shock you, but I like to believe he was a little guy like me. Why think in terms of him being small and thin? He seemed to have incredible strength, but how do we know from the scriptures how big he was? If he were a colossal muscleman, why would the rulers of the Philistines each pay Delilah eleven hundred shekels of silver for her to find out the secret of his strength? (Judges 16:5). The Philistines were so convinced by what they saw of Samson that they were ready to pay money to find out the secret of his strength so that they could overcome him.

If he were big and strong, they would not think there was a secret to his power. Three times we are told the secret of his strength was the Holy Spirit would come on him and give him supernatural strength:

The **Spirit of the LORD** came powerfully upon him so that he tore the lion apart with his bare hands as he might have torn a young goat (Judges 14:6).

Then the **Spirit of the LORD** came powerfully upon him. He went down to Ashkelon, struck down thirty of their men, stripped them of everything and gave their clothes to those who had explained the riddle (Judges 14:19).

As he approached Lehi, the Philistines came toward him shouting. **The Spirit of the LORD** came powerfully upon him. The ropes on his arms became like charred flax, and the bindings dropped from his hands (Judges 15:14).

In Exodus 31:3-5, we see the Spirit of God filling Bezalel with artistic talent, skills in metalwork to create and design things for the Tabernacle of the Lord.

He gave leadership gifts to Gideon. In Judges 6:15, Gideon proclaims his spiritual bankruptcy. When the Spirit comes on him in verse 34, he was ready to face the massive army of the Midianites with only 300 men. You are not alone; you and the Holy Spirit make a powerful team when you have God the Holy Spirit on your side, working in you and through you.

What characteristics of personhood do you see in the following scriptures? (Perhaps each person in the group can look up and read the following passages).

Ephesians 4:30. (He can be grieved)

1 Thessalonians 5:19. (The Spirit's fire can be quenched)

Hebrews 10:29. (He can be insulted).

Acts 1:16. (He can speak. The Holy Spirit **spoke**....")

Acts 5:3. (He can be lied to).

Acts 7:51. (He can be resisted)

Acts 15:28. "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit.... (He thinks)

Romans 8:14. "Those who are **led** by the Spirit of God are the Sons of God."

John 14:16, He can counsel you and be with you. "...He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever." The Greek word used here is *paracletos*, and means, "one called alongside"- a counselor and an encourager.

The Holy Spirit has been sent to be alongside you forever. You are not alone even though you may be lonely. This One called alongside you will comfort and counsel you with His presence and love. So many times I hear of people talking about the Holy Spirit using the word "it" in describing the Spirit. The Spirit is not an "it," He is a "He." It is time to begin treating Him as God as much as we do the Father and the Lord Jesus.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, thank you for your presence and your power. Please open my eyes to see new ways that you want to manifest Jesus to this world through me. Amen.

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