

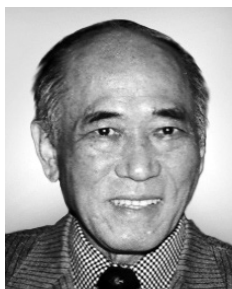
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“The Holy Spirit”

by

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About the Author



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LORD'S DAY, OCTOBER 1

GENESIS 1:1-2

JOHN 1:1-3

*"Thy word is a
lamp unto my feet..."*

THE HOLY SPIRIT

There is an urgent and universal need for Christians to be well acquainted with the person of the Holy Spirit, for the knowledge in this area is either woefully lacking in some, or mixed with much that is false in others. Ignorance of the Third Person of the Holy Trinity is dishonouring to Him and highly injurious to ourselves. On the other hand, confused and erroneous teaching leads to a multitude of unchristian and unscriptural practices. It is needful therefore that every true child of God make a serious and diligent study of the Holy Scriptures.

In the Westminster Confession of Faith, Larger Catechism Question 9 says: "How many persons are there in the Godhead?" Answer: "There be three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one true, eternal God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory; although distinguished by their personal properties." Christians are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Benedictions are ended with the same words.

Of God the Father, most of us can say: "He is the Lord Almighty who created all things and me." Of God the Son, we all know Him as "the Son of God who loved me and died for me." But what can you say of the Holy Ghost? Can you say with any degree of confidence that "He is the Comforter sent from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, and He lives in me?" If we humbly confess our ignorance of the Holy Spirit, the blessed Spirit will teach us and guide us into all truth.

The gift of the Spirit is the crowning mercy of God in Christ. It was in the eternal counsels of the Triune Godhead that the Church should be born of the Spirit and be sustained, nourished, kept and sanctified by the same blessed Spirit. Every spiritual gift of God is communicated to us by the Spirit. All our knowledge and understanding of the truth is by the enlightening of the Spirit. The question is: how well do you know the Spirit?

THOUGHT: Ignorance of the Spirit is not bliss.

PRAYER: Lord, teach me about the Holy Spirit.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 2

JOHN 14: 15-18

1 CORINTHIANS 2:9-16

“...and a light unto my path.”

THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH

Men of the world (“*the natural man*”) cannot receive the Spirit of truth because they do not know Him, neither can they understand His teaching. The Spirit has come to reveal and to teach us the deep things of God that “*eye hath not seen, nor ear ... heard the things which God hath prepared for them that love him*” (1 Cor 2:9). These are spiritual things, the invisible things of God (1 Cor 2:14).

The worldwide “Holy Spirit Renewal” movement is also the Charismatic movement. Its groups and members make extravagant and startling claims of “gifts of the Holy Spirit” – prophecies, visions, healings, tongues, “signs and wonders.” Today we shall look into a few of these claims and examine them in the light of God’s Word, whether the alleged “miracles” are indeed attributable to the “*Spirit of truth*.”

A fervent Charismatic couple was reported to have had this extraordinary experience: “One day our automobile was involved in an accident and the bodywork was badly dented. That night we committed the matter to God in prayer. Next morning, lo and behold, the dent had disappeared, healed by the Holy Spirit!!” Among other claims of Holy Spirit healing are: dead puppies raised to life, washing machines healed, empty gas tanks supernaturally filled, men and women “slain” (*The Charismatics* by MacArthur, 1979). In America and elsewhere these claims are so prolific that they can hardly be numbered, let alone verified.

But verification is not the problem. We are more concerned with the understanding of the work of the Spirit. When our Lord promised to send the Comforter, “*that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth*” (John 14:16-17), was it for the purpose of our mundane and material needs? Is the Spirit (or another spirit) the agent responsible for the ever-abounding and bizarre claims of “signs and miracles”?

THOUGHT: (Read John 8:32.)

PRAYER: “Open my eyes that I may see glimpses of truth Thou hast for me...”

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 3

JOHN 14:16-21

PSALM 119:49-56

“O how love I thy law!...”

HOLY SPIRIT: PARACLETE, COMFORTER

Christ's departure was absolutely necessary for the Comforter's coming. To His disciples He said, *“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you”* (John 16:7). It was part of God the Father's divine plan for man's salvation.

God first sent His Son to dwell among men as Emmanuel, God incarnate, the eternal Word made flesh (John 1:14). Now our Lord's earthly task was done and the time came for Him to return to the Father. Nevertheless, He did not leave them comfortless, like orphans. Read John 14:16-18.

God then sent His Spirit to take the place of our ascended Lord, with added benefits. Whereas our Lord's presence on earth in person was limited in time, the Spirit is to abide for ever; and whereas during the days of His flesh, He was present in only one place at any one time, the Holy Spirit is able to reside with believers individually in all places at all times. Read Romans 11:33.

The Holy Spirit comes to us personally as *“the Paraclete”* (Greek) or *“Comforter”* to each individual believer. The work of the Comforter is more than to console. He is sent from God the Father and our Lord Jesus to stand by our side and to strengthen us, and help us along in our spiritual walk in the same way as Jesus had done for the disciples while He was on earth. Beyond “comforting,” the Comforter strengthens us in our weaknesses, consoles us when we are cast down, supplies grace when we are in need, illumines us when we are perplexed, teaches and guides us into all truth, and keeps us safe until we arrive Home.

As our Lord glorified the Father by dying for us, the Spirit glorifies the Son by living in us. Thank God for the ever present Comforter.

THOUGHT: Does the Comforter or Paraclete dwell in me?

PRAYER: Father, manifest Thyself in me.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 4

JOHN 15:18-27

JEREMIAH 31:31-34

*“...it is my meditation
all the day.”*

HE SHALL TESTIFY OF ME

It is a sad and startling statement of truth that the world hates God the Father and God the Son, and this without cause. The world also hates the followers of the Son. To a handful of disciples our Lord entrusted the Great Commission. What hopes of success could there be in such a precarious assignment? Humanly speaking, none.

But ours is a God of infinite resource and power. Against whatever violence and opposition which the Gospel was likely to meet, our Lord had made adequate provision to ensure complete success. His “secret weapon” is disclosed to us in John 15:26: “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth ...he shall testify of me.” More than any other passage of the Bible, this verse describes the key role of the Holy Spirit in advancing the cause of Christ and in prosecuting God’s redemptive plan to a glorious conclusion.

To all Christian workers and fellow believers in the Lord; here is a vital lesson for today. In the midst of a hostile world let us have a clear vision of the Gospel work and its assured success. Oppositions and persecutions should not discourage us, but rather confirm our Saviour’s words of assurance: “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). Our Lord reigns victorious on high. To us He has given the Comforter: “... he shall testify of me” (John 15:26).

The Spirit of truth continues to testify on behalf of our ascended Lord. His witness is effective in preachers and hearers of the Gospel alike. When we first trusted the Lord for salvation we thanked God for the preacher. But we forgot to thank the Spirit of truth, for it was His testifying to the truth in the preacher’s message and confirming it in our hearts that effected our salvation, not the preacher’s eloquence or our penitent tears. I thank Thee, O blessed Holy Spirit, for testifying for the Lord Jesus.

THOUGHT: Is there a place for “altar calls” in evangelism?

PRAYER: Lord, I thank Thee for the silent testimony of Thy Spirit.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 5

JOHN 14:15-18

2 CORINTHIANS 1:20-22

*“How sweet are
thy words unto my taste...”*

PROMISE OF EVERLASTING CONSOLATION

Our Lord's imminent separation from the disciples filled their hearts with sorrow, anxiety and uncertainty for the future. What would they do without their Master? Might not the same fears come to us also? But these are needless fears, for ours is a complete salvation. Our Lord does not only save, He comforts and keeps!

To the grieving disciples Jesus promised another Comforter. This is the great New Testament promise to all believers. He is Christ's advocate, someone who would plead His cause and take care of His concerns on earth after His departure. When Christ was with the disciples, He spoke for them, and He cared for them; but now that He was leaving them, another Comforter would continue the work.

Who is this Comforter? He is the Spirit of Truth that *“proceedeth from the Father”* (John 15:26). God the Father who spared not His Son, but delivered Him up for us all, is also the Giver of this wonderful gift, the Holy Spirit Comforter. How is this blessing procured? By the intercession of our Lord Jesus. *“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give...”* (John 14:16). Not that God the Father is in any way reluctant, but only that the gift is a fruit of Christ's mediation. O how our Saviour cares for us!

Notice further the permanence of the blessing: *“... that he may abide with you for ever”* (John 14:16). The Holy Spirit of God will reside with the followers of Jesus as long as they live. If you are a believer and a disciple, you will never lack a comforter. The Holy Spirit Comforter abides with you forever! This is our everlasting consolation and assurance. We may be parted asunder, dispersed far and wide, but the Comforter will be with us all, in all places and at all times! That is every believer's blessed heritage.

This precious promise is made on one condition: that we keep His commandments as a token of our love to Him (John 14:15).

THOUGHT: All the promises of God in Christ are yea and Amen.

PRAYER: (Thank God for His promise in Matthew 28:20).

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 6

JOB 33:1-4

1 CORINTHIANS 2:9-16

“...yea, sweeter than
honey to my mouth!”

THE SPIRIT A PERSON

The Holy Spirit is infinitely powerful. There is nothing He cannot do. But it is quite wrong to think of Him merely as some impersonal power or force or influence, as some do. Let us see the clear teaching of Scripture concerning the person of the Holy Spirit. God's Word declares beyond a shadow of doubt that the Holy Spirit has intelligence, purposeful action and emotion. These qualities are not possessed by an impersonal power or influence or force.

Intelligence. In 1 Corinthians 2, we read that (a) it is the Spirit who reveals the things which God has prepared for them that love Him (v 9), (b) the Spirit searches and knows the deep things of God (vv 10-11), (c) the Holy Ghost teaches the spiritual things of God (vv 13-14). It is the will of God the Father that His children should come to a knowledge of deep spiritual truths. To this end, He sends the Holy Spirit who knows all to teach and instruct us. An impersonal power cannot understand anything of God, let alone teach.

Purposeful Action. The Spirit speaks: “*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly...*” (1 Tim 4:1). “*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches...*” (Rev 2:7). He commands or exercises authority: “*...the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work...*” (Acts 13:2). He intercedes for believers: “*...the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us...*” (Rom 8:26). The intercession of the Spirit proves His distinct personality.

Emotion. The Holy Spirit feels for us: “*Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is in the mind of the Spirit...*” (Rom 8:26-27). Paul warns us to “*grieve not the holy Spirit of God*” (Eph 4:30). These and many other passages reveal to us that the blessed Third Person bears a great concern for us, far beyond what we can even remotely appreciate, as He groans and grieves on our behalf.

THOUGHT: The Holy Spirit has a personal interest in me.

PRAYER: Father, may Thy Spirit reveal to me Thy deep truths.

THE TITLES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Scripture ascribes to the Holy Spirit names and titles signifying certain aspects of His personality and deity. While some of these are peculiar to Himself, others are shared in common with the Father and the Son. In the eternal plan of redemption, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are revealed as three Persons, each with a distinct function. Nevertheless their Triune Oneness or Trinity must never be detracted from. In their every operation the Three Persons are in ever closest collaboration and concurrence.

For this reason, the Third Person of the Trinity is called “*Spirit of your Father*” (Matt 10:20) as well as “*Spirit of his Son*” (Gal 4:6), for the Spirit is always acting in conjunction with Father and Son, and operations of the one are in effect operations of the other. Therein lies the indivisible essence of the divine Godhead. “The Spirit” describes His divine nature, for “*God is a Spirit*” (John 4:24). He is without any material or visible substance, and therefore must on no account be represented by any image or material thing. The Spirit’s operation on men’s hearts is invisible and intangible, like a “breath” or movement of “wind” (Ezek 37:9, Acts 2:2).

“*The Holy Spirit*” is His most common title, the term “holy” expressing two thoughts. First, it concerns His nature, so different from that of false gods (Exod 15:11). Second, it concerns His works, all of which are perfect and pure – absolutely holy. “*The Spirit of Christ*” (Rom 8:9) reminds us that our Lord Jesus sent Him to further His cause on earth (Acts 2:33; John 16:14). “*The Spirit of the Lord*” (Acts 8:39) is His title because He possesses divine authority from God the Father and thus requires unhesitating submission from us. “*The eternal Spirit*” (Heb 9:14) refers to His divine Godhead and timeless origin. “*Paraclete*” or “*Comforter*” (John 14:16) signifies that the Spirit is coming to take the place of Christ, now bodily ascended to Heaven, and to do for His disciples what Christ had done for them before.

THOUGHT: Increased knowledge of the Holy Spirit must increase my reverence in worship.

PRAYER: Teach me, O Lord, to worship Thee in Spirit and in truth.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN OLD TESTAMENT TIMES

That God the Holy Spirit was present and active in Old Testament times, long before Pentecost, is clear to any serious student of God's Word. How otherwise could the Old Testament saints have been regenerated, walking by faith and generally perform works acceptable to God? It was the Spirit who prompted true prayer and spiritual worship, and produced fruit in the lives of believers in much the same way as He does now. The best example of Holy Spirit inspiration was in the writing of the Old Testament books (2 Pet 1:21).

But the earliest activity of the Spirit was in the creation. Before the worlds were fashioned and the *"things which are seen were not made of things which do appear"* (Heb 11:3), and *"the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep,"* God's Spirit *"moved upon the face of the waters"* (Gen 1:2). God generated life and by His Spirit perfected His work of creation. From the Old Testament record we see that the origin of life, its maintenance, and development depend entirely on the Spirit's operation.

The Spirit coming upon certain chosen men of God endowed them with courage and physical strength, men such as the Judges whom God raised up for the deliverance of Israel (Judges 3, 6, 11, 14, 15). In the intellectual sphere, the Spirit gave certain men special wisdom and artistic skills (Exod 28:3; 31:3; 35:30-31). Great leaders such as Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David; and prophets such as Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, were men on whom God's Spirit came in mighty fashion.

THOUGHT: "Breathe on me, Breath of God, fill me with life anew. That I may love what Thou dost love, and do what Thou wouldst do."

PRAYER: Fill me, O Lord, with Thy Spirit, for Thy purpose.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 9

JOHN 14:15-31

ACTS 1:4-11

Open thou mine eyes...

WHY THE SPIRIT CAME

With Christ ascended, leaving the disciples on earth, the Gospel cause would have died an early and natural death – but for the Spirit's coming. This event made all the difference! It ensured that the Gospel seed already sown would take root and become a mighty tree one day to fill all the earth. The Holy Spirit came to do the following:

- (a) To witness unto the exaltation of Christ. Ten days after the risen Lord had ascended, the promised Comforter came in broad daylight. Not as a gentle dove, but with the sound of a rushing mighty wind from heaven, the Spirit settled on the disciples as cloven tongues of fire. Our Lord exalted on high had answered by wind and fire!
- (b) To take Christ's place. Our Lord had promised the sorrowing disciples, “*And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever... I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you*” (John 14:16, 18). The Comforter came to comfort, strengthen, guide, encourage, and to do all that Christ would do – to all His disciples in all places at all times!
- (c) To promote Christ's cause. The Gospel was to be preached to all, unto the uttermost part of the earth. The adversary is powerful and the world hostile. Against these the handful of disciples were no match, but with the aid of God's Spirit they were more than conquerors. With the Spirit co-labouring, the Gospel message goes forth with power, sinners are converted and saints edified. Believers are enabled to walk in newness of life and to be fruitful for the Lord.
- (d) To empower Christ's servants. Before the Spirit came, the disciples were a weak, fearful and disunited lot. When the Spirit came and filled them they were instantly transformed. As a fearless band they went about, boldly proclaiming Christ, and in His name worked mighty signs and wonders. We may not work any “signs and wonders” but we need the Spirit's empowerment just the same. Without Him we can do nothing!

THOUGHT: How can I receive the Spirit's empowerment?

PRAYER: Lord, may Thy Spirit descend upon my heart.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 10

1 KINGS 19:1-14

ACTS 2:1-7

...that I may behold
wondrous things out of Thy law.

UNIQUE “SPIRIT SIGNS” OF PENTECOST

The Spirit’s advent at Pentecost was marked by three signs, unique and peculiar to Apostolic times, not seen today. The three signs are:

- (a) “A sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind,” and it filled all the house where they were sitting. Apparently it was a thunderous sound heard by all the assembled disciples. In His discourse with Nicodemus (John 3:8), our Lord compared the way of the Spirit with that of wind – powerful, mysterious, invisible, and irresistible. We see the workings of the Spirit but not the Spirit Himself.
- (b) “*Cloven tongues like as of fire ... sat upon each of them.*” These “tongues like as of fire” sat upon each of the Apostles, and upon them alone. How do we know? The promise of power from on high was made exclusively to the Apostles (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:2, 8). On the day of the Pentecost, “*they were all with one accord in one place.*” This referred to the twelve Apostles (Acts 1:26; 2:1) and it was only on these that the Spirit sat. These “*cloven tongues*” marked out the twelve as the authorized ambassadors or Apostles of the enthroned Lamb. It was the promised “baptism of fire,” i.e. the baptism with the Spirit mentioned by John the Baptist (Matt 3:11).
- (c) “*They ... began to speak with other tongues*” as the Spirit gave them utterance. This was the only “public sign” which struck the multitude gathered in Jerusalem. Being Pentecost, these “*devout men, out of every nation under heaven*” had come for the annual feast. They were amazed and marvelled, for the Apostles, all Galileans, were speaking “*in our tongues the wonderful works of God*” (Acts 2:11). Over a dozen intelligible non-Jewish languages were spoken, being heard by the overseas Jews gathered in Jerusalem.

The Apostles were heard speaking “*the wonderful works of God*” in a dozen foreign languages! That was Pentecost!

THOUGHT: Are today’s “tongues” like those of Pentecost?

PRAYER: Lord, help me to discern truth from error.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 11

GENESIS 6:1-3

1 CORINTHIANS 12:1-11

*Thy Word is better
than silver and gold.*

THE SPIRIT'S WORK UPON THE WORLD

Many of the Spirit's works are wrought upon men who are not of the elect. "The Holy Spirit works in two ways. In some men's hearts he works with restraining Grace only, and the restraining Grace, though it will not save them, is enough to keep them from breaking out into the open and corrupt vices in which some men indulge who are totally left by the restraints of the Spirit... God the Holy Spirit may work in men some good desires and feelings, and yet have no design of saving them. But mark, none of these feelings are things that accompany sure salvation, for if so, they would be continued. But he does not work omnipotently to save, except in the persons of his own elect, whom he assuredly brings to himself. I believe, then, that the trembling of Felix is to be accounted for by the restraining grace of the Spirit quickening his conscience and making him tremble" (*Paul's Sermon Before Felix* by CH Spurgeon).

The operations of the blessed Spirit extend over all the creation. By His restraining action over the wicked He makes this world a place fit for human habitation still. Few today realize how much we owe to the Third Person of the Trinity for holding in leash the children of the Devil, preventing them from releasing their awesome weapons of massive destruction, or restraining the enemies of God from utterly consuming the Church on earth.

If God should leave men entirely to their natural corruptions and to the unbridled power of the prince of this world, all show of goodness and morality (now still remaining even in the most depraved society) would quickly be banished. Men would become unfeeling to the vilest sin, and rampant wickedness would quickly engulf the whole world. This would be a return to Noah's days just before the flood (Gen 6:3-12).

The world hates the people of God (John 15:19). What holds back the enmity of the wicked? Nothing but the restraining power of the Holy Spirit! Thank God for the Spirit.

THOUGHT: Why does God not destroy the wicked in the world?

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Lord, for the Spirit's restraining power.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 12

PROVERBS 1:20-23

JOHN 16:1-7

*The entrance of
Thy Word gives light.*

“IF I GO NOT AWAY”

In the divine plan it was absolutely necessary for our Lord to return to the Father on completion of His ministry. He told the disciples so and this made them sad. The wisdom of this “Divine Strategy” was not immediately apparent to them. Therefore His words filled their hearts with sorrow. “How we wish and desire Thy physical presence with us always!” This was the disciples’ heart-cry, and perhaps ours too. If only Jesus were in our midst, everything would be right.

The disciples leaned heavily on the Master’s physical presence. They had grown to be selfishly dependent on His personal availability. He was like an external crutch, or even as a nursing mother to a group of babes. Such dependency was not in their best interests. The disciples must stand on their own feet, and this would not be except the Lord leave them. In their immaturity the disciples were saddened by the Master’s words. They had a hard lesson to learn, which they did and well.

All Christians must learn not to think of Jesus in terms of His visible presence. We must be weaned away from “external crutches,” and grow out of the “nurse-maid dependent” mentality. The Divine Strategy calls for all true disciples to enter into a higher and deeper spiritual experience: not a visible Christ but the invisible indwelling Spirit must come to each follower.

But the visible Christ must first depart! This He did and as He promised, the Holy Spirit Comforter was sent from the Father and the Son. Now the Lord’s presence with His people was not subject to physical limitation. The Spirit came and filled all the disciples, indwelling each one -- no longer an external aid but an inner transforming, renewing and energizing Spirit.

Let us appropriate to ourselves our Lord’s promise: “I will send you the Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever. Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world ... but I must go away!”

THOUGHT: Does the indwelling Spirit of Christ live in me?

PRAYER: Lord, teach me the deep things of God.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 13

JOHN 3:1-7

EPHESIANS 2:1-9

Jesus said,

"Ye must be born again!"

THE SPIRIT REGENERATING (I)

I was only a child of eight but the scene remains imprinted in my mind to this day. The man lay motionless on the roadside. His wife crouched over him, embraced him and with loud sobbing called out to him. But he did not respond in any way. I had seen death. The breath of life had left the man and he could neither hear nor see nor feel. He was a corpse and only by some miracle could life be restored to him.

That is a picture of the unregenerate man: he is dead in trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1). He cannot enter God's Kingdom (John 3:3, 5). We may approach him in ever so many ways but he will not and cannot respond. We may thunder into his ears with threats of hell, display before his eyes the Law of God, appeal to his reason and intellect with the logic of the Gospel, but all to no avail, for he is dead in sin. God must come to his aid.

Every child of Adam is in the same sad condition, spiritually dead. His intellect, will and emotions are corrupt. His intellect is dead to the things of God. No amount of reasoning will penetrate his thinking. He simply cannot grasp them, for sin has killed his understanding. He is blind, deaf and unfeeling towards spiritual things. His will is enslaved by sin, his emotions are hostile to God (Rom 8:7). He is dead towards God. He needs spiritual life. He needs a miracle.

To Nicodemus, and every seeking soul, our Lord says, "You must be born again! You must be regenerated by the Spirit of God if you wish to enter God's Kingdom." This world passes away and every earthling with it. But God's everlasting Kingdom endures and is prepared, reserved for those equipped with "Kingdom life," God's life. This life is the gift of God the Holy Spirit. No man can earn it or buy it. Man can do nothing, no more than a corpse can get up and walk. Only God's Spirit can give life. Read Titus 3:5. Come then, dear reader, and by faith in Jesus Christ, receive the regeneration of the Spirit, not of works lest any man should boast (Eph 2:9).

THOUGHT: Have I been regenerated, born again?

PRAYER: Lord, may Thy Spirit begin this work in me today.

THE SPIRIT REGENERATING (II)

Regeneration is a mystery incomprehensible to the world but precious to the child of God. Like the preaching of the cross, it is foolishness to them that perish; *"but unto us which are saved it is the power of God"* (1 Cor 1:18). Regeneration is the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit upon the soul of God's elect, imparting to him spiritual life.

This new life makes him responsive to God's Spirit and active in holy exercises of the heart: he sorrows for his sin, puts his faith in Christ, begins to love God and the things of God. This great and radical change is effected in spite of all the opposition of the natural man against God. *"So then it is not of him that willeth... but of God that sheweth mercy"* (Rom 9:16). It is the Spirit's initiative and operation.

Wayne Storr was steeped in idolatry and worldly practices. He loved to smoke, drink, gamble and engage in filthy talk. He hated the Gospel especially when his wife was converted. However, one day by her gentle persuasion he followed her to church and came under the sound of the Gospel. The Spirit of God worked in his heart and implanted in him the new life. Being regenerated he became alive toward God and the things of God. He hated his past life, sorrowed for his sins, and turned to the Saviour in repentance.

Listen to his testimony: "After I was saved, I lost the craving for things of the world. I stopped smoking and drinking, playing cards and going to the cinema. My circle of friends was changed. I no longer enjoyed the company of worldly people. I began to love God's Word, God's people and the things of God. No one had asked me to do all these things, but within me I knew. Although I have less money than before, I am at peace and contented. My old sinful ways gave me no satisfaction. They are things of the past. I am truly a new man."

Read Romans 8:14-15.

THOUGHT: (Read Titus 3:5.)

PRAYER: Lord, evermore give me to drink Thy water of life.

THE SPIRIT REGENERATING (III)

In some societies there has been a great proliferation of "born again" people. Prominent businessmen, politicians, entertainers, night club operators, film stars, pop and rock musicians, famous athletes all claim the "born again" label. Many years before the term would have caused embarrassment. Then it became rather fashionable. Richard Quebedeaux in his books (*The Worldly Evangelicals* and *The Young Evangelicals*) describes the American scene with candour. These "born again" people are little different from the rest. They drink, entertain, go to the movies and generally live like the world. The question is, "What sort of born-again profession is this?"

The genuine "born again" experience is Holy Spirit regeneration. It is born *"not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God"* (John 1:13). The new birth is not something a person chooses to do for himself, something physical, social, fashionable or worldly. It is a miracle of God's power putting new life into one who is spiritually dead. It is by the *"exceeding greatness of his power"* which raised Christ from the dead (Eph 1:19-20). If genuine, this *"regeneration"* leads to *"newness of life"* (Rom 6:4).

Newness of life means a new outlook, new desires, and a new life-style. With new eyesight, the born-again person sees things in a new light, in their true perspective. He begins to see things as God sees them. Things of the world diminish in worth while things of God – the invisible things – become of first importance. The heart is filled with a new appetite, new interests and desires: love for God, the things of God and the law of God. There is hatred for sin and the world. The way of life is changed. Evil habits and practices give way to holiness of life and separation from the world.

All this comes about by God. God the Holy Spirit must do His work in you and me. *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (person): old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new"* (2 Cor 5:17).

THOUGHT: Am I born again? Regenerated?

PRAYER: Lord, may Thy Spirit help me to live in newness of life.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 16

JOHN 9:30-41

1 CORINTHIANS 2:9-14

*"My soul fainteth
for thy salvation..."*

THE SPIRIT ENLIGHTENING

A dead man cannot see. Neither can an unregenerate man, being spiritually dead, see the things of God. He is spiritually blind. This is not to say that he may not be well informed or highly knowledgeable in theology. The Pharisees of our Lord's day prided themselves as the "religious intelligentsia." They were well versed in Scripture and excelled in the knowledge of the law. But they were spiritually blind, as many in churches, Bible colleges and seminaries are today.

Spiritual enlightenment is not a mere informing of the mind or filling the head with knowledge of God. A professor of theology, a great evangelist or even your own pastor may have profound knowledge. But without Holy Spirit enlightenment he is totally blind (Mark 8:18).

Spiritual enlightenment is the opening of one's spiritual perception and understanding by the working of God's Spirit. One who is unregenerated, spiritually dead, remains unenlightened, blind to the things of God. He needs to be brought to life by the Spirit's quickening power (John 6:63). Pray then for Holy Spirit quickening, so that the dead soul may receive newness of life, spiritual life.

Once you have received spiritual life, you begin to engage in spiritual activities. God's Spirit shines the light of His Word (as you read obediently), illuminating your mind and you begin to see the eternal issues come into view. You are enlightened to see the nature of sin, of self, your true depraved condition, and your need of the Saviour; and you flee to Him for salvation.

The enlightened soul sees the things of God. How great is His love, and how I must love Him, with heart and soul and mind and strength. How pure and holy is He, my Lord and my God! How can I walk before Him, except to present my body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to Him! Let me daily behold Him and worship Him in the beauty of holiness.

THOUGHT: Do I see the beauty of God the Spirit?

PRAYER: "Open my eyes that I may see glimpses of truth Thou hast for me."

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 17

JOHN 8:1-11

ACTS 2:37-42

“... but I hope in thy word.”

THE SPIRIT CONVICTING

Of ourselves we could never be truly convicted of our wretched condition, for “*the heart is deceitful above all things*” (Jer 17:9). Until we have been purged and cleansed by the blood of the Lamb, our hearts are foul and filthy, putrid and loathsome. And yet, left to our own conceits, we might pride ourselves for being “morally solid citizens,” at least a shade better than the man across the street. So the Pharisee praised his own goodness (Luke 18:11). To such as he, our Lord would say, “*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!*”

Thank God for the Holy Spirit who alone can tear down our external facade of morality, like “*whited sepulchres*” outwardly beautiful, “*but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness*” (Matt 23:27). Thank God that His Spirit in mercy condescended to come to me, and open my eyes to see my sinful state. Then beholding, I cried, “*Have mercy upon me... For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me...*” (Ps 51:1, 3). Read David’s words in Psalm 32:3-4 describing the experience of the sinner under conviction.

Not by my sense of shame and morality did I come to see my own wretchedness, but it was by the exceeding greatness of the Spirit’s power that my eyes were opened and my mind was fixed upon the hideousness of my sin within. It is God’s Spirit that revealed to me my pride and self-importance, my rebellion and enmity against God, my careless breaking of His holy law. It is God’s Spirit that points out the multitude of my sins and makes me realize that all my thoughts, desires and imaginations are corrupt, perverse and hateful; even my “good works” appear as “*filthy rags*.”

O the amazing grace of the Holy Spirit that He should in mercy reach down to me in my vile condition to convict me of my sin, and to point me to the Saviour. Thanksgiving, honour and praise be for ever given unto God the Spirit for leading me to God the Son.

THOUGHT: Conviction in hell? Too late!

PRAYER: O, wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 18

HOSEA 11:1-4

LUKE 14:16-23

"I hate vain thoughts..."

THE SPIRIT DRAWING

"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him..." (John 6:44). This statement of divine truth is profound and humbling. Some Christian workers who have more zeal than knowledge will object thus: "If that were true, then you are insulting our intelligence. If people are unable to accept Christ by an act of their free will, then evangelism is a waste of time and effort!"

But God's Word is true, let every man be a liar! None will ever be drawn to Christ, whether by preaching or persuasion, except there first be the working of the Holy Spirit to open the sinner's heart to receive the message. So, while we must preach and persuade, let us put our confidence in the Spirit's power, not in our prowess! No sinner ever knocks at His door for mercy but that Christ has first knocked (Rev 3:20) at his heart's door by the operation of His Spirit. We love Him because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). We seek Christ because He first sought us (Luke 19:10). That is the truth.

Further, Romans 3:11 tells us, *"There is none that seeketh after God."* The sad fact is: the natural man is enslaved by sin, helpless to take the first step toward God. He is bent on his own way. Not even the preaching of hell does effectively bring him to the Saviour, for he is gripped by many things which he is unwilling to forsake: his idols, the things of this world which hold first place in his affections and interests. A rich man once said to the preacher: "If I become a Christian can I smoke and drink?" (he did not ask about other and worse vices which he enjoyed). He was not drawn by the Spirit.

So, men reject the Saviour. They have their excuses, but in their hearts they love their idols and the world. But God's Spirit perseveres against all. As in the story of the Great Supper, He goes out of His way to "compel," to win souls to Christ. So we preach and persuade, relying on the Holy Spirit to draw men to the Saviour *"with bands of love"* (Hosea 11:4).

THOUGHT: "Draw me nearer, nearer blessed Lord, To the cross where Thou hast died."

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, never to give up sharing the gospel.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19

GALATIANS 5:16-25

EPHESIANS 2:8-9

“... *but thy law do I love.*”

THE SPIRIT’S GIFT OF FAITH

“Somehow I had the feeling that I was saved. I had the faith once I made my decision for Christ.” Is this the kind of faith you rely on? My friend, our chief concern is whether we have “saving faith,” the faith that effectually unites us to our Saviour. That faith is not a natural act of the mind assenting to the Gospel, of deciding for Christ, as one may assent to any other truth when suitably convinced.

Saving faith is God’s gift imparted to the believer by a supernatural act of the Spirit (Eph 2:8-9). How does the Spirit impart saving faith? The sinner hearing the Word is quickened by the Spirit, awakened to his lost condition and convicted of his sin. By the Spirit’s further working, he is brought to realize his vileness and guilt, and his utter unacceptability before God.

As a lad of ten, I heard the Gospel and recognized my sinful lost condition. I knew that no human power could help me. I was convinced that without Christ I was lost, condemned, without hope, without strength to save myself. The Word of God said, *“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly”* (Rom 5:6). Christ died for me! With tears of contrition I called on the Saviour, “Lord, save me. I believe that You died to save me. I put all my trust in You and none other.”

That was my prayer of salvation. Thank God for enabling me to pray that prayer. It was the Spirit who implanted that faith in me. I thank God that He emptied me of all self-confidence and self-righteousness. The Spirit showed me my need and led me to the Saviour. It was all God’s doing – not of works, all of faith. Saving faith!

This faith has sustained me these past many decades. Whenever in doubt, the Spirit reassures me. Whenever discouraged, He upholds me. If I had trusted in my own reasoning and intellect, my Christian life would have shipwrecked long ago. But the Spirit’s gift of faith will see me through to final victory.

THOUGHT: (Read 1 John 5:4.)

PRAYER: Lord, teach me to walk more by faith, less by sight.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 20

JOHN 15:1-7

1 CORINTHIANS 6:15-20

“Thou art my hiding place...”

THE SPIRIT UNITING TO CHRIST

Whereas the unbeliever is separated from God and bound for everlasting damnation, the believer is one with Christ and shall dwell with Him eternally in the future to come. Our union with the Lord is likened to that of the vine with its branches (John 15:5) or members of the body with the head (1 Cor 12:27; Eph 5:23, 30). It is a close, continuous, intimate and vital union, and ensures for each believer unspeakable blessings and benefits both now and in eternity to come. How did we come into the blessed position of union with the Lord? It is altogether the grace of God that worked this marvelous relationship. For at one time we were *“aliens... and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ”* (Eph 2:12-13).

The Gospel declares to us God's redemption in Christ. It is the Holy Spirit who draws us to Christ to receive Him as Saviour and Lord. *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us...”* (Titus 3:5). And it was not only by His excellent mercy, but it was also *“the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe...”* (Eph 1:19).

Being saved now we are united with Christ, a mysterious and spiritual relationship. In John 15:4-5, our Lord says, *“Abide in me, and I in you... He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”* This vital union between a believer and the Lord is the Spirit's work: Christ indwells the believer by His Spirit; the believer abides in Christ by faith (which is a gift of the Spirit).

Furthermore, *“...if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he... shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you”* (Rom 8:11). We conclude then that the Spirit bonds us to Christ, making us one with Him to share in all that are His! Hallelujah, what a salvation! United to the King of kings!

THOUGHT: How can I know if I am united to Christ?

PRAYER: Lord, help me always to abide in Thee as Thou art in me.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21

ROMANS 8:5-9

1 CORINTHIANS 3:16-17

My soul doth delight in them.

THE SPIRIT INDWELLING (I)

The question which we should be asking today is not “Are you a Christian?” Many, possibly most, of those who say “Yes,” are not even remotely Christian but think they are – under false pretenses or mistaken notions. What we should ask is, “Have you the Holy Spirit?” This will catch many professing Christians by surprise and they will be dumb-founded, hard-pressed for an answer. My question then is “Do you have the Spirit?” This is a critical and basic issue which we must settle once and for all, for if you cannot say “Yes,” your whole Christian standing is in question.

Now read carefully what God’s Word has to say on this matter. “*But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*” (Rom 8:9). The proposition is clear and unmistakable: IF YOU HAVE NOT THE SPIRIT, YOU DO NOT BELONG TO CHRIST!

Let us pursue the statement further. If you do not belong to Christ then whose are you? All men are either Christ’s or the Devil’s. There is no third position. This may startle some readers but may the fact awaken some in the way of salvation. Outside of Christ all men are subjects of the Kingdom of Satan and heirs of wrath. Have you been delivered out of that deadly situation? Have you been translated out of the Kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of God’s dear Son? Have you been joined to Christ, made the temple of God, the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit?

How can this be, you ask? Observe: The Spirit and Christ go together. If you have Christ as your Redeemer, His Spirit dwells in you. You may be a prominent member of a large and respectable church; you may move in the best Christian circles; you may even be a Christian worker or pastor. All these are only external links and God is not looking for these. God is interested in that vital life-union of His Spirit. If you are His, the Spirit must dwell in you. It is “all or none.”

THOUGHT: The Holy Spirit is also the Spirit of Christ.

PRAYER: O, Breath of God, come breathe within me.

LORD'S DAY, OCTOBER 22

JOHN 20:19-22

GALATIANS 4:4-6

Thy testimonies are wonderful!

THE SPIRIT INDWELLING (II)

Unusual interest surrounds the "Shroud of Turin" supposedly used by our Lord at His burial. The Church of Rome makes much capital out of such relics and "holy articles." The Shroud if "certified authentic" would be another lucrative addition to their mercenary collection. Men in their superstition would embrace anything left by their departed Saviour, but He left no such things, neither did He ever bless any such things for religious devotion. To do so is idolatry.

But one thing He did before His departure. He made this promise: *"I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever... I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you"* (John 14:16, 18). The Saviour understood the disciples' need for strength, direction and comfort. He knew their weakness and their dependence on Him. He loved them and knew full well that they could not do without Him. As He had said, *"... without me ye can do nothing"* (John 15:5). Hence, His provision of a "parting gift."

"I will not leave you comfortless. I will come to you and I will dwell in you." Herein is His promise and assurance. Herein too is every believer's heritage. If you are a believer, a true follower of Jesus, He dwells in you by His Spirit. Every believer is His temple or dwelling-place. *"And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father"* (Gal 4:6). Observe carefully where the Spirit is said to dwell: in your hearts.

The Spirit inspires us to cry *"Abba, Father."* And be that cry ever so faint, it is the breath of the indwelling Spirit, and meets a response from the heart of God. What a wonderful Saviour to have, not in crucifixes, not in rosaries or any man-made "holy article," but He lives in the hearts of His own.

THOUGHT: "He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today! He walks with me and talks with me, Along life's narrow way. He lives, He lives, salvation to impart! You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart." (Alfred Ackley)

PRAYER: Lord, may Thy Holy Spirit, live in me. Amen.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 23

PSALM 139:1-10

JOHN 4:13-14

In Thy Word do I hope.

THE SPIRIT INDWELLING (III)

You are a believer. Someone asks, “How do you know that the Holy Spirit lives in you?” What is your answer? Can you give a ready and proper answer “*with meekness and fear*” (1 Pet 3:15)? This is our spiritual exercise for today, to set out in order the reasons why we know the Holy Spirit dwells in each of us.

1. We war against sin and the flesh. Because the Spirit of God dwells in us, He helps us to wage war against sin and the flesh, to mortify and subdue the evil desires of the heart in which He lives (Gal 5:17; Rom 8:13). This is part of His sanctifying work in us. Every time we resist sin and overcome temptations, it is the Spirit in us directing and energizing. It is the Spirit that helps us deny ourselves and submit to God.
2. We have a spirit of prayer. “*Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered*” (Rom 8:26). The natural man does not like to pray. Prayer is tedious and tasteless. The Spirit in us understands our problem and He helps us overcome our distaste and lethargy toward prayer. He stirs up our spiritual affections and holy desires. He encourages us to ask for spiritual things and to persevere in prayer. He enables us to keep our early morning Quiet Time and to love it.
3. We mind the things of God. The Spirit attunes our minds to heavenly and spiritual things. For “*they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace*” (Rom 8:5-6). The Spirit changes our tastes, our likes and dislikes. With His help we love the things of God: to worship, to keep His commandments, to promote His Kingdom. Our love and esteem for worldly people and things diminishes in proportion. We are willing to suffer for our Lord and the Gospel. Our hopes and aspirations are above, not on earth below.

THOUGHT: Does the Spirit dwell in me?

PRAYER: Lord, may I be sensitive to Thy Spirit’s prompting.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 24

GENESIS 28:13-17

GALATIANS 2:20

"I opened my mouth, and panted..."

THE SPIRIT INDWELLING (IV)

In the account of God's appearance and promise to Jacob, we see significant similarities to our Lord's promise of the Comforter. In Jacob's case, the promised blessing was made by God to an undeserving member of the "covenant family" of Abraham. It was loving, gracious and intimate. It was all-embracing: *"I am with thee, and will keep thee ... and will bring thee again into this land (Canaan)... I will not leave thee..."* (Gen 28:15). Jesus' promise was made by Him to spiritual Israel, members of the "covenant family" of Abraham. We who belong to this great family of God are undeserving, sinners saved by grace. Nevertheless, the promised Comforter condescends to take up His abode with us, dwelling in hearts cleansed by the Lamb's blood. Herein we see Jesus' infinite love toward us.

"... I am with thee, and will keep thee..." The Lord was with Jacob. So will the Comforter be with us, to abide, to teach and to guide us. God kept His promise with Jacob and fulfilled every word of it perfectly. So will our Comforter strengthen, uphold, encourage, comfort and sustain us in every needful way, for our best interest.

"... (I) will bring thee again into this land..." God was with Jacob until He brought him with great substance back to the promised land. This is just what the Comforter will do for us. He will be with us until He sees us safely Home *"with great substance"* (Gen 15:14), even the eternal inheritance of our Promised Land.

"... I will not leave thee..." The Comforter takes up permanent residence in the believer's heart. He abides with us forever (John 14:16). His faithfulness and constancy are unwavering. We may rest assured in Him that He will never leave us as He said.

Put yourself in Jacob's place, and you will better appreciate how the Comforter will care for us as the Indwelling Spirit.

THOUGHT: What made Jacob the recipient of such blessing?

PRAYER: Lord, keep me from straying from Thee.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 25

JOHN 14:25-29

PSALM 25:1-5

"...for I longed for thy commandments."

THE SPIRIT TEACHING (I)

A great deal of theological instruction in colleges and seminaries today is nothing more than men's vain philosophy dressed up in pious terms and devoid of true spiritual power. Such knowledge "*puffeth up*" (1 Cor 8:1), causes swollen heads and empty hearts. Christians ought to be able to discern true Holy Spirit teaching from the false. Here are four critical tests.

1. Holy Spirit teaching stirs the soul. "*For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*" (2 Cor 4:6). The Spirit's light penetrates and warms the heart, subdues the will and brings it into subjection under God. It moulds the heart and stamps God's image upon it.
2. Holy Spirit teaching humbles the soul. It reveals our ignorance and worthlessness, our sin and corruption, our helplessness and bankruptcy. It causes us to exclaim like Isaiah, "*Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips...*" (Isa 6:5). Like the Apostle Paul, it makes us see ourselves as chief among sinners (1 Tim 1:15).
3. Holy Spirit teaching changes values and outlook. Things of the world, which to the unregenerate are highly esteemed, appear trivial and worthless. All the attractions "*under the sun*" become but vanity and vexation of spirit, transitory and worthless. Earthly honours, riches and fame no longer grip the heart. Those things which once were gain are now but loss, no better than dung (Phil 3:7-8).
4. Holy Spirit teaching transforms lives. The soul that comes under the conviction of the Spirit is made to see the sinfulness of sin, its deceptiveness and its deadly end. The teaching of the Spirit causes us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world (Titus 2:12). The obedient soul becomes more Christlike in character and conduct.

THOUGHT: I have to live as the Lord Jesus did on earth.

PRAYER: Lord, please live in me and help me walk as Thou didst.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26

2 TIMOTHY 3:13-17

2 PETER 1:19-21

“...deliver me from every evil...”

THE SPIRIT TEACHING (II)

God the Holy Spirit gave the Church only one Bible as its Magna Carta or the Great Charter. The Church stands or falls with it. Satan and his forces through the ages have assailed the Bible by perverting it (Gal 1:7), by sowing doubt (Gen 3:1, 4) or by introducing extra-biblical teachings. Many have imbibed his deceptive doctrines resulting in their faith being shipwrecked.

Can we be sure that the Bible is all sufficient for our guidance and instruction? The Spirit has the answer. He says, *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”* (2 Tim 3:16). The Spirit gives clear teaching on the status of the Bible. *“All scripture,”* meaning the whole Bible, was given by inspiration of God, i.e. “God breathed.” This is the operation of the Holy Spirit, “breathing” or “inspiring” the words which the prophets and Apostles were to write. This was how the Bible came to be written. It is no human book.

The prophets and Apostles did not write for themselves or of their own initiative. They were instruments of the Spirit. 2 Peter 1:20-21: *“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost”* This *“more sure word of prophecy”* is to be loved, studied and obeyed. *“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope”* (Rom 15:4).

Now let's return to our opening verse: *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God...”* Our Lord says, *“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away”* (Matt 24:35). If we receive this Word and in faith do as it says, our Lord compares us to a wise man who builds his house upon a rock. Such a house will stand fast against the storms of doubt and unbelief. This is the message for today from the Holy Spirit our teacher.

THOUGHT: (Read Psalm 119:89.)

PRAYER: (Use Psalm 119:97.)

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 27

JOHN 14:24-26

2 TIMOTHY 4:1-5

"...so will I keep thy precepts."

THE SPIRIT TEACHING (III)

Perilous times are upon the Church. Great deception and subversion of the Bible's vital doctrines are undermining the faith of many. But the true Church and faithful believer shall be preserved, for the Holy Spirit is not unmindful of their well-being. Dangers and pitfalls abound but He has adequate warnings and safeguards for His people.

The Spirit's warnings concerning false teachers are plentiful. Two of these are: *"... in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy..."* (1 Tim 4:1-2). *"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them..."* (2 Pet 2:1).

We are clearly warned of the appearance of false teachers in the church who are like thieves and robbers, or like *"grievous wolves... not sparing the flock"* (Acts 20:29). What must we do in such a situation? Our Lord says, *"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves"* (Matt 7:15). Be wise and alert, then, dear reader. *"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world"* (1 John 4:1). Do not believe every preacher but put their message to the test. Is the pure Word of God being preached?

The blessed Holy Spirit lovingly exhorts us. *"If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ ... But refuse profane and old wives' fables... Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them..."* (1 Tim 4:6-7, 16). *"...mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrines which ye have learned; and avoid them"* (Rom 16:17). *"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers ... come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord ... and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you..."* (2 Cor 6:14, 17-18).

THOUGHT: The Holy Spirit is our infallible Teacher.

PRAYER: Lord, help me to be attentive to Thy words.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 28

ROMANS 8:9-14

GALATIANS 6:7-9

"The word is very pure..."

THE SPIRIT CLEANSING (I)

Believers love the hymn by Robert Lowry which says: "What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus; What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Oh! precious is the flow that makes me white as snow; No other fount I know, Nothing but the blood of Jesus."

If "nothing but the blood of Jesus" can cleanse, what part does the Holy Spirit play? It is by the working of the Spirit that our eyes are opened to see the sinfulness of our sin, and our hearts are made to feel its deadly weight. By God's Spirit we are enabled to see our need of the cleansing blood. Then by faith, trusting in God's Word, we are moved to receive the cleansing blood.

It is by the power of the Spirit that we come to trust in the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice on the cross and to be cleansed.

To the believer who is overtaken by some sin and even now is wondering what to do, God's Word is your guide. *"For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live"* (Rom 8:13). God's Word is true and piercing. No matter how painful, it is the way of life and peace. Heed the solemn warning and the gracious promise: through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the flesh!

If you are a believer, you belong to the Lord. He owns you and you are a "debtor" to Him: you owe it to Him (who died for you) to live for His glory, and to please Him. You are "debtor" to the Holy Spirit (who regenerated you) to submit yourself to His absolute control. Your filial response to the Lord is both a duty and a high privilege. If your sin dulls your perception to these, may God's warning awaken you: *"For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die."* This means spiritual and eternal death – separation from God and Christ our life. If you through the Spirit put to death the sinful practices of the body, you shall live! What a gracious offer – reject not!

THOUGHT: Am I not already saved? Am I not a child of God?

PRAYER: Lord, help me to submit and obey.

LORD'S DAY, OCTOBER 29

GALATIANS 5:16-25

REVELATION 21:7-8

“...therefore thy servant loveth it.”

THE SPIRIT CLEANSING (II)

The matter under consideration has important practical application, so let us deliberate further. Romans 8:13 is God's truth and is very serious. No matter what your salvation experience or profession of faith is, no matter how sure you are of your conversion or how strong your doctrinal beliefs are, this verse applies.

If you live in sin now, pursuing a continual course, persistently satisfying the desires of your corrupt nature, and go on living under the dominion of the flesh, you fall under the weight of God's Word: *“The wages of sin is death”* (Rom 6:23). Hiding behind excuses and human defences will not help. *“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption...”* (Gal 6:7-8).

O, the madness of men courting eternal death just to enjoy the pleasure of sin for a season! O, the folly of Christians who imagine that they can serve God and sin at the same time, presuming that their seat in Heaven has been reserved and secured. O friend, Heaven cannot be entered by you except by violent striving (Matt 11:12). You have an Advocate and Comforter to help you in the fight. The Kingdom of God was never intended to pamper the self-indulgent and triflers of the flesh. Rather it is for the reward and rest of those who wrestle and fight (Eph 6:12-18; 1 Cor 9:26-27).

Why then please your flesh and imperil your soul? Will you for a paltry morsel throw away your eternal birthright, like the rebel Esau? God's Word “pulls no punches” but gives it straight: *“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death”* (Rev 21:8). If you through the Spirit put to death the filthy acts of the body, you shall live!

THOUGHT: The Spirit is our ever-present help along the Highway of Holiness.

PRAYER: Lord, may all who claim Thy name walk in Thy Highway.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 30

COLOSSIANS 2:1-10

HEBREWS 12:1-6

"I am small and despised..."

THE SPIRIT CLEANSING (III)

The life of sin and the life of grace are mutually exclusive and opposed to each other. The devil will persuade you otherwise, but no one can serve the flesh and God. You must die to sin if you want to live unto God. If *"...ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live"* (Rom 8:13). There is encouragement and hope for the sorely-tried contestant. Think not of your own carnal appetites and your selfish gratification. Think of the holiness of God. Look to the Saviour! Call on the Holy Spirit Comforter.

You are not alone in your spiritual race. Others have run before us and successfully finished the course. See, we are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses! So let us shed off every weight of sin and *"run with patience the race that is set before us. Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith..."* (Heb 12:1-2). Our Lord won the victory with His own blood to gain Heaven for us. Can we hope to "sail into Heaven" if we continue to soak in sin? You say, "But it's so hard to stop. I want to but can't."

But the Comforter says, *"Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin"* (Heb 12:4). The Lord is at hand. He is a rewarder and helper of them that diligently seek Him (Heb 11:6). Read Philippians 4:13 for the Spirit's assurance to us. At times He will send chastening for our correction (Heb 12:6-7). Thank God for chastening: it is for our good. It is the Holy Spirit's way of cleansing and refining.

The Highway of Holiness is the way of the Spirit. It is the only way that leads to Heaven. It is not an easy way but it is a safe way. It is not a broad way, for it is strait and narrow. Those who walk in it need to persevere with spiritual stamina, for it is a long way, a life-long way. As we travel along we find we are not alone. We have a strong Companion, the Holy Spirit Comforter, by our side. He helps us, not just once or only for a day. But He helps us every day, all the way! His best help is to purify us and make us more like Him!

THOUGHT: Am I walking with the Comforter?

PRAYER: Lord, keep me and cleanse me, day by day.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 31

ISAIAH 63:10-14

ROMANS 8:14

“...yet do not I forget thy precepts.”

THE SPIRIT LEADING

No greater leader has the world seen than Moses the servant of God. Yet it is recorded that *“Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth”* (Num 12:3). *“And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend...”* (Exod 33:11). What a man, Moses! What honour adorned this “very meek” man. Do you want to know the secret of his greatness?

Moses did not act and move by his natural impulse or native intelligence. The Lord led him. Moses walked with the Lord and pleased the Lord, so that He could speak to him as a friend *“face to face.”* Who was He who spoke *“face to face”* with Moses? He was none other than God the Holy Spirit – the Comforter! Isaiah gave us a valuable insight into this great man’s life: *“Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? where is he that put his holy Spirit within him? That led them by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name? ... As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the LORD caused him to rest: so didst thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name”* (Isa 63:11, 12, 14).

Of the Spirit’s leading spoken in Romans 8:14 Matthew Henry has a helpful comment: *“Led by the Spirit of God as a scholar in his learning is led by his tutor, as a traveller in his journey is led by his guide, as a soldier in his engagements is led by his captain.”* In these instances we see the eternal element. But there is also the vital internal element of the Spirit’s leading. David touched on this aspect when he prayed, *“Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes ... Give me understanding. ... Make me to go in the path of thy commandments ... Incline my heart unto thy testimonies...”* (Ps 119:33-36).

The Holy Spirit bends our will and moulds our heart to be subject to His impulses. Thus He leads His children along the perfect path.

THOUGHT: “All the way my Saviour leads me, what have I to ask beside?”

PRAYER: Lead me in Thy truth, and teach me, for Thou art the God of my salvation.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 1

EPHESIANS 2:1-6

EZEKIEL 37:11-14

*Will you live this day
and this week for Jesus?*

LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

All the world is dead, spiritually speaking. Only the believer, the truly born again Christian is alive. Before we came to the Saviour, we too were dead. It is only by His saving grace and life-giving power that we have life in us. In case some reader is still unclear about his spiritual state, listen to God's Word in Ephesians 2:1-5:

"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience ... But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us..."

The Christian's life came by the Spirit of God. It was the Spirit who gave us the new birth. Without the Spirit of God, we have no life at all: we would still be dead in sins. Praise God, He reached down to us. He redeemed us from the horror of eternal death into the joy of life in Christ.

The continuing life of a believer is wholly dependent on the Holy Spirit's indwelling, keeping, cleansing and sanctifying power. Too often we are so puffed up by our own self-importance, so taken up by what we are "doing for God" that we fail to look to God and wait on His Spirit to do a deep work in us. Our spiritual life remains shallow, parched and dry. Our life cannot bless others. This is our greatest loss and sadness.

Our urgent need is for the Spirit's fresh anointing and filling. Our life in the Spirit is at a low ebb. You may not agree, and that confirms it. We all need His blessing and power. We need to yield to the Spirit His rightful place in our hearts and lives. Self must abdicate; the Spirit must be enthroned within. Nothing less will do!

THOUGHT: Is yours a "life in the Spirit" or a "life of self"?

PRAYER: Lord, may Jesus be found in me, and seen in me. Amen.

OUR LORD’S TEACHING ON THE HOLY SPIRIT (I)

During World War Two, Hitler’s propaganda chief Goebbels said, “If we tell a lie often enough, people will eventually believe it.” This sort of Satanic strategy succeeds when truth is suppressed or ignored. Today a flood of false teaching issues forth from Charismatic preachers. Doctrines concerning the person, character and work of the Holy Spirit are distorted and perverted. Constantly drummed into the ears of millions of the “electronic church,” falsehood eventually is believed. Goebbels was right in his diabolical theory.

Today God’s people are not left in the dark. Unlike the Germans in the 1930s, the truth is not suppressed. God’s Word is still freely available. It is our only protection against the false teaching of the Charismatic Movement concerning the Holy Spirit. Men may blaspheme against or malign the Holy Spirit, thinking that He is absent and silent, but He is neither. The Holy Spirit of God is ever present with His people, and through the pages of Holy Scripture He speaks. He who has ears, let him hear!

Of the blessed Holy Spirit, our Lord says:

- (a) He is the *“Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive”* (John 14:17).
- (b) *“...the Holy Ghost... shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said...”* (John 14:26).
- (c) *“...the Spirit of truth ... shall testify of me”* (John 15:26).
- (d) The Comforter, *“...when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment”* (John 16:8).
- (e) *“...the Spirit of truth... will guide you into all truth ... He shall glorify me...”* (John 16:13-14).

Here we have in summary the essential teachings concerning the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Anything which contradicts our Lord’s words is therefore false.

THOUGHT: Can I enumerate the various functions of the Holy Spirit?

PRAYER: Lord, may Thy Spirit guide me daily into Thy truth.

OUR LORD'S TEACHING ON THE HOLY SPIRIT (II)

Read again yesterday's passage in conjunction with "About the Holy Spirit" in the introductory page. The filth and falsehood in that introduction shows out clearly against the light of God's truth in yesterday's reading. In three areas the falsity of the two Charismatic teachers is exposed:

- a) The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth. From this fact, there must be no departure or compromise. A man who claims to be God's servant must come under the Spirit's control. He must be a messenger of truth. God, the Author of truth, could not have ordered Oral Roberts to raise money, or else... This is extortion. Roberts played the fund-raising game well. He got his money, all that he wanted, including US\$1.3 million from a Florida dog-track owner. All this could not be the work of the Spirit of Truth.
- b) The Comforter will rebuke the world of sin. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Holiness. He will not tolerate sin in any form. The man who claims to be part of the "Holy Spirit Renewal" movement must submit himself under the Spirit's control. He must live a clean, Spirit-filled life. The PTL scandal, when exposed by the media news sleuths, reeked with the malodour of Sodom and Gomorrah, and doubly foul, for a host of evil lusts was perpetuated under the banner of "Praise the Lord." Sin shall not have dominion – if the Holy Spirit is in charge.
- c) The Spirit shall glorify me, so said the Lord. If a movement is truly of the Holy Spirit, it cannot do anything else but bring honour and glory to Jesus Christ. But the "Holy Spirit Renewal" movement in America has dragged the name of Jesus into the mud of scandal and filthy lucre. Even before the trial of Jim Bakker was to hit the public eye, the skeletons in the cupboard were clamouring to be let out. All this cannot be of the Holy Spirit.

Let God's people take heed how they live their lives.

THOUGHT: The Holy Spirit does not lead man to sin.

PRAYER: Lord, keep me ever holy for Thy name's sake.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 4

JOHN 3:7-16

PSALM 51:1-10

“My soul thirsteth for God.”

THE SPIRIT’S WORK IN REGENERATION

The Spirit’s work in regeneration is altogether beyond the understanding of the man of the world. To him it makes no sense. *“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned”* (1 Cor 2:14). Pray then for Holy Spirit illumination and discernment!

- (a) The Spirit’s Work is a Mystery. Our Lord likens it to the wind, moving about unseen. No man can tell whence it comes or where it goes. *“So is every one that is born of the Spirit”* (John 3:8). The Spirit does His work invisibly, but the effects are clearly seen and heard – like the wind!
- (b) The Spirit’s Work is Irresistible. When the wind gathers momentum even ocean-going vessels are tossed about and cast on the shore. So the Holy Spirit works irresistibly and powerfully in changing lives and transforming characters – effects clearly seen and heard!
- (c) The Spirit’s Work is Instantaneous. We may liken it to conception. In a moment of time, a baby is conceived, a new life comes into being. So it is with regeneration. In an instant, the Spirit imparts new life and that person is born again.

A person is either regenerated or he is not.

- (d) The Spirit’s Work is Permanent. Once God’s Spirit has implanted His life in you, you are born again. You have become a child of God. To you, our Lord Jesus says, *“And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand and no man is able to pluck you out of my Father’s hand”* (John 10:28-29).

This means: “Once saved, always saved”!

THOUGHT: If I am a child of God, need I doubt my salvation?

PRAYER: Lord, hold me in Thy almighty hand. Amen.

"YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN" (I)

Nicodemus saw in Jesus a Teacher extraordinary. Jesus not only spoke but did extraordinary things. His works were contrary to the laws of nature. Could He be the promised Messiah sent from God? Perhaps Jesus could enlighten him on things of God's Kingdom. Nicodemus sought out Jesus.

Jesus read Nicodemus' heart-desire. Nicodemus was discontented with life. As far as this life was concerned, he had enough. He was a ruler of the Jews, a scholar and politician, well respected in society. But these things did not satisfy him. He came to Jesus with the admiration of a disciple. "*Rabbi* (Master)," he said. Jesus saw his need.

Admiration of Jesus is not enough for admission to God's Kingdom. Living a principled and moral life is not good enough either. You may be like Nicodemus, a strict observer of the Pharisees' code of conduct, correct to the letter of the law. Like him, you may devote your life to religion, or involve yourself in the service of society and in charitable works.

No, none of these things, though good in man's eyes, can gain you an entrance into God's Kingdom. Our Lord's words to Nicodemus speak to those who are yet outside the Kingdom.

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again" (John 3:5-7).

Wonder of wonders! How can a man be born when he is old? Nicodemus could not puzzle it out. Neither can anyone else, except the Spirit of God enlightens.

THOUGHT: Have I been born again?

PRAYER: Lord, teach me as Thou hast taught Nicodemus.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 6

TITUS 3:5

ROMANS 1:18-32

*"In all thy ways
acknowledge him..."*

"YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN" (II)

A great "born again" movement has been sweeping around the world. A term which once would have embarrassed its wearer, today has become acceptable and almost fashionable. Film stars, celebrities, night club singers and entertainers, famous athletes and politicians and even casino operators claim to be born again. In some circles almost everybody is born again.

What does it mean to be "born again"? First, let us say what it does not mean. It is not joining a church, or identifying oneself with a certain group, or getting baptized, or being able to speak in "tongues." None of these can cause a person to be born again. Neither is it giving a sum of money to a church or engaging in charitable works. As the Apostle said, *"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost"* (Titus 3:5).

Recall our Lord's words to Nicodemus: *"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit"* (John 3:5). "Water" signifies the washing of regeneration, the cleansing of sins and the purification of the soul by the precious blood of Jesus. "Spirit" signifies the Holy Spirit of God working the miracle of the new birth, implanting the life of God into the believer's heart, giving him new life.

John 3:16 and 3:36 convey the same message: whosoever believes on the Son of God has everlasting life, *"which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God"* (John 1:13). It is of God, the work of the Holy Spirit, and it must show in the *"newness of life"* which every born again person must manifest in his daily living. Without this *"newness of life,"* this changed life, wearing the label means nothing.

THOUGHT: Am I simply "wearing a label" or have I been truly born again?

PRAYER: *"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."*

A NEW CREATURE

A genuine work of the Spirit takes a person through three essential stages:

- (a) Conviction and Cleansing of Sin. Ezekiel 11:18 says, *"... and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof and all the abominations..."* The Apostle Peter exhorted the Jews on the day of Pentecost, *"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..."* (Acts 2:38). Salvation is by *"repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Acts 20:21). Only the Holy Spirit can lead a person to conviction of sin and repentance toward God.
- (b) Hearts of Stone are Changed to Hearts of Flesh. To those who come in repentance the Lord says, *"I will take the stony heart ... and will give them an heart of flesh"* (Ezek 11:19). Mere outward show without change of heart is play-acting and hypocrisy. God hates hypocrisy. Only God the Holy Spirit can change hearts. When the Spirit has done that, there is a change of disposition -- a new affection of intellect, will and emotion toward God. This means a new loyalty and allegiance.
- (c) "Old things are passed away..." This is the acid test of those who wear the "born again" label. Their claim must be set against their lifestyle: their talk must be matched by their walk. God's Word plainly states: *"...they shall take away all the detestable things... thereof and all the abominations thereof..."* (Ezek 11:18). "Holy Spirit Renewal" professors must prove themselves by changed lives, *"old things are passed away ... all things are become new."* So must everyone who calls himself a born again Christian. Mere lip profession means nothing.

Only the Holy Spirit can make you a new creature.

THOUGHT: Have I gone through the three stages?

PRAYER: Lord, help me daily to put off the old man with his deeds and put on the new man, after the image of Christ.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8

1 CORINTHIANS 6:19-20

JOHN 14:15-20

*"How amiable are
thy tabernacles..."*

THE SPIRIT'S INDWELLING OUR PRECIOUS HERITAGE (I)

In "25 Questions and Answers About the Holy Spirit" published by a Charismatic church we read the following:

Question 1: Does one receive the Holy Spirit at conversion?

Answer: No.

Question 4: Is speaking in tongues the only sign for receiving the Holy Spirit?

Answer: Yes.

When false doctrine is respectably dressed in crisp black and white print, backed by liberal misquotes of Scripture, *"if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect"* (Matt 24:24). How subtle is the enemy of our souls! Did not the Holy Spirit warn specifically *"that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils"* (1 Tim 4:1)?

Did you receive the Holy Spirit at conversion? Is it possible for anyone to be converted without receiving the Holy Spirit? Answer: it is absolutely impossible for a person to be converted except by receiving the Holy Spirit. *"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his"* (Rom 8:9).

There are a dozen other Scripture passages affirming this basic truth. Remember our Lord's words to Nicodemus, *"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit"*? Then the words of Paul: *"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body... and have been all made to drink into one Spirit"* (1 Cor 12:13).

Finally, the Charismatic "tongues" are not the tongues of the Holy Spirit given at Pentecost, which were known languages. They are meaningless "gibberish" no different from pagan tongues. How then can they be the sign for receiving the Holy Spirit?

THOUGHT: (Read John 14:18.)

PRAYER: Lord, may I always go to Thy Word for the truth.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 9

1 CORINTHIANS 12:13

ISAIAH 63:7-14

“...O LORD of hosts!”

THE SPIRIT’S INDWELLING OUR PRECIOUS HERITAGE (II)

The believer at regeneration is baptized by one Spirit, whether Jew or Gentile, and is made to “*drink into one Spirit*” (1 Cor 12:13). This verse expresses the intimate nature of the believer’s union with Christ in the receiving of His Spirit internally (by drinking). Receiving the Spirit into our bodies in a vital way, like life-sustaining water, we are nourished and sustained unto everlasting life. From this we see God’s amazing grace and matchless love to take us into closest union with Himself. Truly it is an intimate presence.

It is also a permanent presence. Our Lord’s promise is that the Comforter shall abide with us and be in us for ever (John 14:16-17). He comes not as the occasional visitor but as Lord Comforter to stay. He lives in you to guide, instruct, strengthen, inspire and encourage. Having begun a work of grace, He has a continuing interest to sustain and perfect our spiritual life till we arrive Home. By His Spirit we are “*sealed unto the day of redemption*” (Eph 4:30). With Him as our life-long Comforter, of whom shall we be afraid?

It is also a unifying presence. The indwelling Spirit unites us to Christ our Redeemer. Our Lord prayed for us in these words: “*And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one...*” (John 17:22-23). By the unifying presence of the Spirit we are joined to God the Father and God the Son, and also to the great family of believers. In this union is joy unspeakable, full of glory.

What a travesty of truth and corruption of Scripture for any so-called “church” to teach that tongues-speaking is “the sign” for receiving the Holy Spirit! And what sort of “tongues” but the babbling of senseless gibberish!

THOUGHT: Have I dabbled in tongues? If so, I must repent!

PRAYER: Lord, keep me from the snare of tongues.

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S POWER IN THE BELIEVER'S LIFE (I)

The Holy Spirit manifests His power in the believer's life in six ways: sanctifying, strengthening, transforming, enlightening, interceding and sustaining.

- (a) Sanctifying: In God's salvation plan, we are not merely delivered from the bondage of sin, but we are *"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit"* (1 Pet 1:2). The Spirit within performs a sanctifying work in the believer's life by giving him power to separate from sin and the world, to resist temptation, to deny self, and to mortify the deeds of the flesh, *"if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live"* (Rom 8:13).
- (b) Strengthening: The Spirit is sent from the Father to be by our side in the place of the Son, as our COM ("alongside of") FORTIS ("strength") or Comforter, the Strengthener by our side! The blessed Spirit is omnipresent to aid all believers, in all places, at all times. He strengthens us in our weakness, lifts us when we are cast down, illumines us when we are perplexed, guides us into all truth, supplies grace to meet every need, and keeps us all the way Home. "His power can make you what you ought to be."
- (c) Transforming: The indwelling Spirit gradually changes us to be like our Lord. This is part of God's plan, that we should be *"conformed to the image of his Son"* (Rom 8:29). This process of moral transformation is painful at times. Nevertheless it is for our good. As we yield ourselves to the Spirit, we learn to *"delight in the law of God after the inward man"* (Rom 7:22), to sorrow for sin (Rom 7:14, 24), to abhor our own proud looks and high thoughts, and to reverence God. Finally, we are *"changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord"* (2 Cor 3:18).

THOUGHT: *"For we are his workmanship..."* (Eph 2:10).

PRAYER: Lord, may Thy almighty power be seen in my life. Amen.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 11

ROMANS 5:3-5

1 CORINTHIANS 2:6-16

*"A day in thy courts
is better than a thousand."*

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S POWER IN THE BELIEVER'S LIFE (II)

We conclude the discussion begun in yesterday's reading:

- (d) Enlightening: Until the Spirit of God came into our lives and quickened us, we were spiritually blind. We could not understand or see the things of God. *"But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God... the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received... the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God"* (1 Cor 2:10-12).

Man's wisdom cannot fathom the deep things of God; only the Holy Spirit can impart such knowledge.

- (e) Interceding: Prayer does not come naturally; the natural or physical man does not like to pray. The flesh is the arch enemy of prayer. Oftentimes we succumb to the flesh and fall into the sin of prayerlessness. We need help urgently! To aid us, God sends the Comforter. *"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for ... the saints according to the will of God"* (Rom 8:26-27). Let us recognize our prayerlessness and plead with the Spirit to aid us.
- (f) Sustaining: The Christian life is no bed of roses; the strait and narrow way is not easy. How can we be sure that we shall follow the Lord to the very end? By ourselves we shall surely fall. When faced with difficulties and setbacks we are almost ready to give up. But the ever-present Spirit comes swiftly to our aid to sustain and uplift us, so that we may *"abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost"* (Rom 15:13). The Spirit in us is well able to sustain us by His power, to keep us from falling, and finally, to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

THOUGHT: God does all things perfectly.

PRAYER: Father, sustain my body and spirit until journey's end.

LORD'S DAY, NOVEMBER 12

PHILIPPIANS 2:6-8

LUKE 4:1-15

*"I had rather be a doorkeeper
in the house of my God..."*

THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE (I)

Our Lord Jesus is the perfect example of a Spirit-filled life. In Him we see the God-man, Emmanuel, the Word made flesh, *"full of grace and truth"* (John 1:14). John the Baptist bore record of Him, saying, *"I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him"* (John 1:32). He went to face the tempter in the wilderness *"full of the Holy Ghost... led by the Spirit"* (Luke 4:1). *"For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"* (Col 2:9).

If we want to live the Spirit-filled life we must look to Jesus, study His life and follow in His steps. His life is worthy of our contemplation and imitation. He came as *"a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief"* (Isa 53:3), to do the Father's will. His was a life of poverty and self-sacrifice. *"The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head"* (Matt 8:20). He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich (2 Cor 8:9).

So ought we His servants and disciples to learn the lesson of humility and poverty, especially those who hold positions of leadership in the Church. The Spirit-filled life is not to jet around in private aircrafts, live in lavish luxury mansions and draw six-figure salaries while claiming to be "renewed in the Spirit" or "filled by the Spirit," or to be able to babble in tongues. Our Lord Jesus never took a cent from anybody, had no "gift of tongues," made no empty claims like today's tele-evangelists.

"Come unto me... learn of me... for I am meek and lowly in heart..." (Matt 11:28-29). Look to Him and imitate His lowliness and purity, His hatred of sin but love for sinners, His self-denial and gentleness. Above all, let us learn His obedience and submission to the Father.

THOUGHT: Spirit-filling must show in Christ-like living.

PRAYER: Lord, may Thy Spirit fill me now.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 13

EPHESIANS 5:15-21

LUKE 11:9-13

“...than to dwell
in the tents of wickedness.”

THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE (II)

The Spirit-filled life is not reserved for some select group of Christians. It is for all believers who ask according to God's will. Our Lord Jesus said, *“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”* (Luke 11:13). We give the best gifts to our children. If so, do you not think God will give us His children the best gift too? *“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”* (Rom 8:32).

The best gift we children ought to ask of our heavenly Father is His own Holy Spirit. He is ever ready and willing to fill us with the Spirit. But the Spirit will not fill dirty hearts. Unless every unclean and contaminating thing is thoroughly purged, the Spirit will not come to us in full measure. If we truly yearn for the Spirit's filling we must pray the prayer of King David in Psalm 51:7-11, *“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.... Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me... take not thy holy spirit from me.”* Fill me with thy Spirit. Amen.

As we come to the Lord and confess our need, He cleanses us anew. With every filthy contaminant purged and every heart chamber renewed and made beautiful, the Spirit comes in and fills it. O, what a blessed thought that He who died to redeem me, paid the price of blood to purchase me, should now dwell in my heart by His Spirit filling every chamber! The Spirit-filled heart means the Lord is in full control. This is the greatest blessedness!

THOUGHT: Do I have the “filling of the Spirit”?

PRAYER: Lord, keep me always clean and pure, fit for the Spirit's filling.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 14

1 JOHN 2:15-17

GALATIANS 2:20-3:3

"No good thing will he withhold..."

THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE (III)

When we were children, electricity had not come to our home. Each evening we took out our oil lamps, trimmed the wicks and filled the oil, in readiness for the night. How brightly they shone, lighting up every room in the house! This was our daily exercise, to "keep the home fires burning."

So it is with Holy Spirit filling. It is a daily business, a daily filling of the "oil of the Spirit." Holy Spirit filling is not a "once-for-all" thing, but it is a daily discipline, a struggle, a battle. There are other contenders clamouring to occupy our heart chambers and displace the Holy Spirit. To open the door and admit them means to drive the Spirit out. Sadly, our flesh is all too willing to let in some of its allies and accomplices. Against these enemies of the Spirit we must ever be vigilant and on guard.

What is it that we need to fight against daily? The first enemy is SELF; that proud, inconsiderate, selfish, aggressive, pushy self. He likes to take up chamber number one of my heart. Next, I see the CARNAL LUST – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life. These strive to take up chamber number two. Then I see the WORLD and MAMMON knocking on chamber number three, with material attractions, temporal pleasures, money and wealth. Lastly, come the CARES OF LIFE, those legitimate and pressing demands that daily surround me, seeking an entry into chamber number four.

I cannot be filled with any of these things and expect Holy Spirit filling as well. My heart has only four chambers. The room is just so much, and all of it must be reserved for God's Spirit. This is my daily struggle. It is a hard fight. Some days I win, some days I lose. But the Lord gives the strength. By His grace we yield Him our whole heart, and He fills us – a day at a time.

THOUGHT: What does it mean if I have no struggle?

PRAYER: Lord, fill me daily and keep me burning for Thee.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 15

PHILIPPIANS 3:7-14

ROMANS 12:1-12

“...from them that walk uprightly.”

THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE (IV)

In the Spirit-filled life, Jesus is preeminent; self and the world are crucified; God's kingdom and His righteousness come first (Phil 1:21; Gal 2:20, 6:4; Matt 6:33). With the Holy Spirit in control of every area of life, the following pattern of living will be seen in the Spirit-filled person:

Holy Living, with sorrow for sin, hunger and thirst after righteousness, a renewed and Christ-honouring lifestyle of separation from sin, bearing the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23).

Fervent Service for God is no burden but a blessed privilege, with new zeal in worship, keeping the Lord's Day holy, attending Prayer Meeting, fellowshiping with brethren, and advancing His Kingdom.

Heavenly Attitude to Earthly Things. The world loses its attraction. His affection is fixed on things above. He desires a better country (Heb 11:16).

Burden for the Lost. With compassion for lost souls, he is fired with holy zeal and evangelistic fervour (1 Cor 9:16).

Steadfast Christian Life. Following the Lord is one life-long steadfast commitment. There is no wavering or turning back, a “pressing toward the mark,” enduring hardship and affliction.

Zeal for God and His Word. He is filled with love of truth, boldness to declare all the counsel of God, to warn against false teaching, to separate from apostasy and to contend for the faith.

Looking for the Saviour. Fully persuaded of his heavenly citizenship, he looks daily for the Saviour, his blessed hope. Read 1 John 3:2.

The Spirit-filled person lives like a citizen of heaven.

THOUGHT: Where have I set my affections: below or above?

PRAYER: Lord, grant me the faith to see the invisible.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 16

2 PETER 1:19-21

2 TIMOTHY 3:16

*“Seven times a day
do I praise thee...”*

A WORD FROM THE LORD

To the Apostles of old God gave unique gifts of understanding and revelation, enabling them to make infallible utterances, whether in prophecy or in tongues. *“For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost”* (2 Pet 1:21). These revelatory gifts were an “interim measure” until the perfected gift of the completed Scripture from God was given. With the passing of the Apostles and the closing of the canon of Scripture, the revelatory gifts ceased.

Today, there is a profusion of claims to revelatory gifts among Charismatic circles and tongues speakers. When these claims come from seemingly balanced and rational persons, it is not surprising that many are thoroughly taken in. Some of the utterances or “word from the Lord” may sound convincingly scriptural, but these claims of divine inspiration are neither insignificant nor harmless.

God has given us His infallible Word, the Holy Scriptures, which is complete and need no further additions and revelations. It is therefore a great error and mischief for any to claim access to divine inspiration or direct revelation from God.

We reject these claims and practices as contrary to the Word of God. By such devious means, the devil has a great door opened for him. If this unscriptural principle is accepted and established in the Church, Satan would set himself up as the authority in the Church through the utterance of false prophets (men like Oral Roberts, Jim Bakker). In a short time, Satan’s words will be received as infallible and the Bible brought into contempt.

Let God’s people abide by that infallible rule: SOLA SCRIPTURA. Only the Word, and nothing but the Word.

THOUGHT: How well do I know the Word, and abide by it?

PRAYER: *“For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.”*

TONGUES HAVE CEASED?

Everywhere tongues speakers are holding forth: the gifts of Pentecost are back with us, so they boldly claim. Charismatics seem to carry the day. Evangelicals are confused. Some are turning Charismatic, babbling in tongues. But in many minds the nagging question lingers on: Have biblical tongues ceased? What sort of tongues are we witnessing today?

Firstly, let us be quite clear and categorical: the Charismatic tongues are neither the tongues of the New Testament record, nor are they of the Holy Spirit. The reasons for our saying so have been given in previous readings. We must not equate today's tongues with New Testament tongues. The New Testament tongues were known languages. The gift of speaking without prior learning was the work of the Holy Spirit. They appeared suddenly, were withdrawn after a short time, and never appeared again after the Apostolic era. They come under the category of the “*signs of an apostle*” (2 Cor 12:12) and passed away with the passing of the Apostles.

Modern tongues consist of the repetitious utterance of a few elementary sounds or syllables, over and over again, in senseless babbling. There are no rules of grammar, or syntax, or vocabulary. Neither speaker nor self-professed “interpreter” understands the tongues. Furthermore, these tongues are spoken by believers as well as unbelievers, by “Christian” and pagan with equal facility. Such cannot be the work of the Holy Spirit. To label the babbling as “angelic tongues” is to insult God's angels.

We conclude therefore, that biblical tongues have ceased. This position is fully borne out by historical evidence as well as the teachings of a long line of “giants of the faith” spanning 1,600 years of Church history, from Chrysostom (347-407) to Arthur Pink (1886-1952). All of these godly men of deep spiritual perception are agreed that biblical tongues have ceased. But present-day tongues speakers continue “*deceiving, and being deceived.*”

THOUGHT: Even the very elect may be deceived.

PRAYER: Lord, keep me from the snare of tongues.

TONGUES THEN AND NOW (I)

Why did God send the miraculous gift of tongues on the day of Pentecost? The answer to this question will help us to steer clear of the present day "ecstatic tongues" and their subtle deception.

Let us firstly recall the event of Pentecost. Note carefully Luke's words in Acts 2:1: "*And when the day of Pentecost was fully come...*" God chose the day. Exactly fifty days after the Resurrection, God's plan of redemption was ready to move to its next phase. The ascended Christ sent His blessed Spirit to inaugurate the New Testament Church by the hands of the Apostles.

But Peter, James and John, and the others were ordinary fisherfolks and unlearned men. How would the multitude recognize them as "God's men"? What was there to mark them out as special servants of the resurrected Christ? Thus, this little Apostolic band must be suitably identified.

On the day of Pentecost (historically coinciding with God giving the Law and the Covenant with Israel), God acted through the Apostles: the Gospel was given and the New Covenant Church was established. In one day 3,000 "firstfruits" converts gathered into the newborn Church (coinciding with the gathering of the firstfruits of harvest).

These were historic and momentous events, authenticated by the gift of tongues. Suddenly, the Galilean band broke out in more than a dozen Gentile languages, declaring "*the wonderful works of God.*" In God's divine plan, the time had come for the Gospel door to be thrown open to the Gentiles -- people of all tongues and nations.

By means of the miraculous effusion of tongues, the Apostles' authority was fully established, the Gospel age was opened and the infant New Testament Church was born. The gift of tongues had served its purpose. It is no longer needed today, hence they have ceased altogether.

THOUGHT: Today's tongues are not of the Holy Spirit.

PRAYER: Grant me understanding, O Lord, as I read Thy Word.

TONGUES THEN AND NOW (II)

Are today's Charismatic tongues the same as those spoken by the Corinthian Church? The modern tongues speakers insist that they are. This is to claim biblical support and credibility for their “ecstatic utterances.” But this is contrary to the teaching of 1 Corinthians 14.

“*Tongues*” in 1 Corinthians 14 refer to real languages. Victor Budgen, in his book “The Charismatics and the Word of God,” gives three reasons for this statement. We quote:

- (a) Exactly the same word (Greek: *glossa*) is used here in the Greek as in the Pentecost account, where the hearers from different regions indisputably heard a variety of genuine languages spoken.
- (b) In verses 10 and 11, Paul refers to the multitude of different languages, each of which has clear meaning.
- (c) Most conclusively of all, the quotation from Isaiah in 1 Corinthians 14:21 takes us to the time when the people of God heard what seemed to them the gibberish of the Assyrian language, but which was nevertheless authentic speech.

Budgen's argument further states: the manifestation of the gift at Corinth was essentially the same as on the Day of Pentecost. From evidence adduced, we also conclude that the tongues speakers at Corinth understood what they were saying.

In the light of the above evidence, the present day tongues stand out as unbiblical, unintelligible “gibberish” or verbal nonsense, understood by nobody – neither speaker nor hearer. Such utterance cannot edify the hearers, neither can it glorify God. How then can it be of the Holy Spirit? We must conclude, therefore, that modern tongues are of another spirit – a counterfeit.

THOUGHT: Why are modern tongues getting to be so popular?

PRAYER: Lord, may I study Thy Word diligently, that I may know what Thy truth is.

TONGUES THEN AND NOW (III)

Today's Charismatic tongues violate God's truth in three vital areas:

- (a) They by-pass the mind: By their own leaders, Charismatics are taught that their "gift of tongues" requires the tongues speaker to abandon conscious, rational control. He must by-pass the mind, holding it in abeyance during the exercise of tongues. The advice given is: "We will not understand the words we are saying, nor should we expect to."

Such doctrine is directly contrary to God's Word. God never intended at any time that His people by-pass the understanding in any sort of communion or worship. On the contrary our Lord laid down the most important commandment: "*And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart... soul... mind... strength.*"

- (b) Charismatics manipulate these tongues: Everywhere Charismatic leaders urge novices and new converts to open their mouths, relax and roll their tongues. "Help the candidate to see that the gift is already given and that all he has to do is receive it... that he is to expect the Spirit to move his vocal cords, but he must co-operate... to open his mouth wide and breathe as deeply as possible..." (AOG handbook).

Charismatic tongues are manufactured by man, not by God.

- (c) They interpret by "imagineering": Both tongues speaker and interpreter do not know what they are saying. Their "interpretation" is pure self-delusion and deception of their hearers. The same "tongues" have as many interpretations as there are interpreters. A missionary recited the Lord's prayer in an African dialect. The so-called interpreter declared that Christ's second coming was imminent! A Chinese student in England spoke her native dialect and was welcomed by the Charismatic group as another tongues speaker!

THOUGHT: Tongues speakers are deceiving and being deceived.

PRAYER: Lord, help me to serve Thee with all my heart and mind.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 21

MATTHEW 8:5-13

PSALM 103:1-5

“...and nothing shall offend them.”

OUR LORD’S HEALING MINISTRY

Our Lord’s healing ministry was unique. Neither before nor after Him was there anything even remotely like His healing ministry, and no surprise, for there was the Creator-God Himself at work. Men of the world, liberal and modernist theologians, explain away His miracles, not recognizing who He is. Is anything too hard for Him who is the source of life and health?

Why then should anyone doubt the eyewitness accounts of His wondrous acts of healing? That *“the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up...”* (Matt 11:5)? As we go through the Gospel records we sense the awe and wonderment of the multitudes who saw with their own eyes the Son of God bringing health and healing to countless thousands throughout the length and breadth of the Holy Land.

Read the Gospels for yourself, my friend, and you will notice the characteristics of Jesus’ healing ministry:

- He healed by a word of command, or at a touch.
- The healing was instantaneous and complete.
- All who asked were healed without exception.
- He healed all diseases, functional and organic.
- He healed freely and never for monetary gain.

Why did Jesus heal? Primarily, it was to authenticate His deity and demonstrate His authority over life. Men had to be convinced that He was sent from God. The eyewitness accounts and the written records of our Lord’s miracles of healing were for one purpose: *“that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name”* (John 20:31). His message of salvation was backed by God bearing Him witness with signs and wonders, and with miracles and mighty deeds.

But the greatest miracle of healing was His own resurrection!

THOUGHT: God the Father has drawn me to the Lord Jesus Christ!

PRAYER: Father, I thank Thee for drawing me to Thy Son Jesus.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 22

2 CORINTHIANS 12

ACTS 5:12-16

*"I will lift up mine eyes
unto the hills..."*

THE APOSTLES' HEALING MINISTRY

The gift of miracle healing was given by our Lord to the Apostles for a purpose and a time. The purpose was to mark them out as God's appointed servants and our Lord's successors in the ministry of the Gospel. The Apostolic band had to be given distinctive credentials so that the infant Church could be established and the Gospel outreach could be extended – by the hands of the Apostles.

Luke's account in Acts 5:12-16 is relevant: *"And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people... Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. There came also a multitude out of the cities... bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one."*

This phenomenal power marked the Apostles' ministry especially in the earlier history of the infant Church. As the Church became firmly established throughout Judea, Samaria and the Roman Empire, the need for this authenticating sign of the Apostles progressively diminished. Whereas in the earlier years of his ministry, Paul worked notable miracles of healing (Acts 14), towards the later years, his gift appears to have waned, probably withdrawn by the Lord.

Thus we read that Paul did not heal Epaphroditus who was *"sick nigh unto death"* (Phil 2:27) nor Timothy whom he advised to *"use a little wine"* for his stomach ailment (1 Tim 5:23), and Trophimus who was *"left at Miletum sick"* (2 Tim 4:20). The Apostle himself was not healed of his *"thorn in the flesh"* despite praying to the Lord three times (2 Cor 12:7-9).

When the authenticating gift of healing was no longer needed, the Lord took it back. The purpose and time for it had passed.

THOUGHT: Tongues have ceased.

PRAYER: Lord, Thy grace is sufficient, in sickness and in health.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 23

ACTS 19:13-18

MATTHEW 7:20-23

“...from whence cometh my help.”

FAITH HEALING TODAY (I)

One feature of the Charismatic scene is the upsurge of “faith healing” conventions with claims of “signs and wonders” and miraculous healings by “gifted healers.” The gifted person is supposed to be endowed with supernatural powers of healing and clairvoyance (ability to know without being told) by direct communication from God about persons and their problems. Some claim the gift of exorcism.

One of the best known faith healers in America was Kathryn Kuhlman whose books are widely read. Her meetings are usually attended by huge crowds, many of them sick, accompanied by anxious relatives. During the healing session, “things happen.” People fall over, “slain in the spirit,” some from the audience jump up from their seats testifying that they have been healed, others leave their crutches and wheelchairs, “cured.” What exactly is going on? Was the Spirit of God working through Kathryn Kuhlman?

To the casual, undiscerning observer, the show is very impressive. “After all who knows better than the person who was healed? Did we not hear his testimony?” But our concern is to answer our basic question: Was God the Holy Spirit at work? Dr William Nolen had been a member of Kuhlman’s team. From his close observation as a medical man, and by personal interviews with “cured” persons, he came to one conclusion: there was not one medically proven cure of any organic disease. All the so-called facts and statistics of cures of organic diseases simply evaporated under investigation.

Kathryn Kuhlman’s consistent claim was: “the Holy Spirit heals through me.” But Dr Nolen writes: “Finally it was over... all the desperately ill patients... were still in their wheelchairs... I stood watching the hopeless cases leave...”

Conclusion: God the Holy Spirit did not work through Kathryn Kuhlman.

THOUGHT: What sort of spirit did Kathryn Kuhlman have?

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, not to be deceived by the evil one.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 24

JOHN 14:18-21

MATTHEW 7:15-20

“...when shall I come
as it is in heaven.”

FAITH HEALING TODAY (II)

More about Kathryn Kuhlman today. It is not disputed that many have been relieved from functional disorders through her ministry, and possibly some organic diseases may also have been cured. These in themselves do not prove that Miss Kuhlman's ministry was of the Holy Spirit. Even cures of organic diseases can be counterfeited by Satan, the father of lies and deception.

Our Lord forewarned against those who claim, “*Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?*” (Matt 7:22). To these, our Lord will say, “*I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity*” (Matt 7:23).

You ask, “But do these drastic pronouncements apply to Miss Kuhlman? Did she not do many wonderful works?” The answer is, Yes, indeed! And that is just what Jesus cautioned against. Not those who did “*wonderful works*” or those who say, “*Lord, Lord*” shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven, “*but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven*” (Matt 7:21).

Listen to our Lord's words: “*Beware of false prophets... Ye shall know them by their fruits ... every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit*” (Matt 7:15-18). Kathryn Kuhlman's life must be examined in the light of our Lord's words. On stage she was an angelic evangelist. Off stage it was another story. Another evangelist divorced his wife to marry her and then in turn divorced from her. Tree and fruit did not match.

Was Kathryn Kuhlman a servant of God, a minister of the true Gospel? In 1972 after her private audience with the pope she said, “When I met Pope Paul there was a oneness.” These few words speak volumes about her loyalty to the Lord. Can one who is “one with the antichrist” also be “one with Christ”?

THOUGHT: False prophets abound.

PRAYER: Lord, help me to discern the wolves in sheep's clothing.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 25

JEREMIAH 5:19-31

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

*The Lord will give
grace and glory.*

FAITH HEALING TODAY (III)

We shall examine the work of John Wimber, a leading faith healer, quoting mainly from Professor Verna Wright's article in the *Sword and Trowel* (1987, No. 1). Prof Wright is chief of rheumatology at Leeds University. We quote from the pen of this godly professor:

"Recently John Wimber was in Leeds where he conducted in St George's church one of his evening meetings. Five of my colleagues (Christian doctors) who go to that church were present. They were so incensed by what they saw that they afterwards wrote an account of their reactions. I will quote to you what they said.

"There was an hour's repetitious chorus singing... A fair amount of reeling and writhing commenced at the start of the singing. No space was found for a Scripture reading... The congregation was at no time called to prayers of confession of sin and repentance. 'Hold out your hands. Feel heat coming through you. Your eyelids may feel heavy. You may feel like falling; some persons may scream. It is all right. You can see the Holy Spirit resting on people, the power of God resting on many.'

Subjects for the team's healing ministry were gathered from the audience by a team member who took the microphone to broadcast his word of knowledge. There were descriptions of symptoms or illnesses that were being suffered by persons present. Those so described were asked to step forward. The list of conditions was general enough... to fit several in any group of five hundred or more."

What do we see in the above account? Firstly, we see the clever and crafty exploitation of hypnosis and mass psychotherapy. The Word of God and prayer were given no place. Clairvoyance was expertly employed – a confidence trick of the evil one.

THOUGHT: Clairvoyance is the tool of soothsayers, witches, fortunetellers.

PRAYER: Lord, may I put my trust in Thee only, and Thy infallible Word.

LORD'S DAY, NOVEMBER 26

JEREMIAH 14:13-16

1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-11

*"Remember the Lord's Day
to keep it holy."*

FAITH HEALING TODAY (IV)

(quoting Prof Wright, *Sword and Trowel*, 1987, No. 1)

We continue with the five doctors' eyewitness account of John Wimber's healing meeting at St George's church, Leeds, in 1986:

"The volunteers were then put into trance while hands were laid on them. They were not unconscious and would, we were assured, hear what was said to them. They remained thus for many minutes with assorted shakings, tremblings, smilings, fallings, swayings and utterings. Their various features were then exhibited to the congregation. We were assured that the smile here and the posture there were clearly visible evidence that the Holy Spirit had descended.

Throughout the building other individuals proceeded to fall into trance. The audience was told that the Holy Spirit might lead some persons to scream or to breathe very deeply. As one expected from hypnotic states these things happened more or less at once. Uncontrollable laughter, crying, groaning, shrieking and sobbing, together with the murmurings of many who wished to minister some spiritual comfort to the affected brethren...

Amplified voices of team members came through, 'It is increasing everywhere. Give us more, Lord. Break that bondage. Release their hearts. Set them free. Relax.'

Now the crucial question: what really was happening? Had the Holy Spirit descended? Or what?

All the five doctors, one of whom is a leading psychiatrist in England, came to one diagnosis: HYPNOSIS – "a very expert performance containing all the textbook characteristics of the induction of hypnosis." Hypnosis is not of the Holy Spirit. It is a man-made technique and if misused can be exploited as a tool of the devil. It is a powerful psychological weapon.

THOUGHT: Satan comes as an angel of light.

PRAYER: Lord, teach us to discern light from darkness.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 27

MATTHEW 9:12

JAMES 5:13-16

*“My help cometh
from the LORD...”*

WHEN YOU ARE SICK

After the last few somewhat “negative” readings (but very important and instructive), let us consider a practical problem which some reader may be facing (now or in the future). What if you, or I, should be struck down with some sickness or accident? What will be your reaction and line of action?

My first reaction is: tell the Lord my problem. Indeed, for every believer, my advice is, in health think sickness, in life think death. Sounds morbid? No, it is wisdom. We must be prepared at all times to meet our Maker. So in sickness, turn first to Him. Did not God’s Word say, “*...in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God*” (Phil 4:6)? Then we are assured that “*the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*” (James 5:16).

Next, I should see my doctor. As our Lord says, “*They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.*” God has given us the blessings of modern medical science and trained persons – physicians and surgeons who are equipped to handle most problems. Being a doctor myself, I suppose I should know better than most, that doctors will be able to heal most diseases, except the last. We all must face reality. Doctors are able up to a point. One day they themselves will succumb.

Does God always heal? It is a fatal error to think so. Not even the Apostle Paul was healed. Of course God can heal anyone anytime in any place, but only according to His own sovereign will and pleasure. So we must not always expect to be healed. To hanker after healing all the time is the devil’s snare. Rather we should strive to be more holy, like the Master.

In everything give thanks! Even in sickness! God has His perfect plan for everyone of His children, and for each one who is sick, He gives His grace (2 Cor 12:9).

THOUGHT: Am I prepared for the final sickness?

PRAYER: Lord, teach me this lesson: to be with Christ is far better.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 28

MATTHEW 24:23-28

2 PETER 2:1-5

*“...which made heaven
and earth.”*

SATAN’S STRATAGEM (I)

In the cause of truth, we have pointed out some errors of the Charismatic movement. This is not to say that all Charismatics are in error. We recognize that many Pentecostals and Charismatics are genuine believers, and their zeal and fervour for the Lord put many of us to shame.

Nevertheless, this should not side-track us away from our duty to continue to expose false teachings wherever it is found. The adversary is ever active, injecting the “satanic element” into the Church through every available doctrinal loophole. His one aim is to subvert the truth of God’s Word and cause the downfall of the Church. His stratagem is deadly and unless we exercise eternal vigilance we shall fall victim to his wiles.

One outstanding leader of the Charismatic movement to fall into Satan’s snare was the late David du Plessis. He declares that “The New Testament... is a blueprint of what should happen in every generation until Jesus comes.” This statement set the pace for the Charismatics in their quest for the New Testament Apostolic gifts of healings and miracles, signs and wonders, prophecies and tongues.

But the New Testament gifts were uniquely given to the Apostles only. There is no scriptural warrant to seek for those gifts today. Those who do so fall into Satan’s snare and receive his counterfeit gifts instead: hence the present proliferation of tongues, signs and wonders, miracles and healings and prophecies, as our Lord forewarned in Matthew 24:24.

Through these counterfeit gifts, Satan makes an entry into the Church, insinuates his word to supplant the Word of God, and sets the stage for the destruction of the Church. Today, more than ever before, we must stand by the Word of God as our only guide and rule and reject any pretended new revelations and prophecies which will surely bring about our downfall.

THOUGHT: Eternal vigilance is the price of survival.

PRAYER: Keep me ever faithful to Thy Word, O Lord. Amen.

SATAN'S STRATAGEM (II)

The Ecumenical Movement's chief aim of re-uniting Christendom made little headway until the Charismatic movement "took off" in the 1960s. Within a short few years, Rome found many Charismatic fellow travellers in the same quest for "signs and wonders." Both Pentecostalism and Roman Catholicism share a common identity in tongues, miracles, visions, extra-biblical revelations and prophecies.

Whereas formerly only the Roman Catholic Church was known for its apparitions and supernatural phenomena, eg. the visions of Lourdes and Fatima and a host of miraculous healings, now the Charismatics also are reporting visions and supernatural encounters and healings everywhere. One Charismatic leader sees an apparition 900 feet tall which he identifies as Jesus. Another claims to have been to heaven and back. The list of "happenings" is too long and some too bizarre to relate. Why all these supernatural "signs and wonders"?

Let us be wise and discerning. The whole spectrum of happenings is a mimicry or imitation of the gifts of the Spirit. When men, in defiance of God's clear teaching, seek for gifts long ago withdrawn, Satan readily steps in as an angel of light to counterfeit the works of the Holy Spirit. Those who go for these "signs and wonders" are falling right into the deceiver's snare.

Because of the common identity now existing between Charismatics and Catholics, an impassable barrier between the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Church has finally been broken down, paving the way to early ecumenical union.

But God's Word says: *"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers... come out from among them, and be ye separate... and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you... saith the Lord Almighty"* (2 Cor 6:14-18).

THOUGHT: When ecumenical union comes to pass, who will be head of the church?

PRAYER: Lord, keep me sanctified and separate for Thee.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 30

EPHESIANS 6:10-18

DEUTERONOMY 18:10-12

“... from everlasting
to everlasting. Amen.”

SATAN’S STRATAGEM (III)

Some Charismatic (and non-Charismatic) healers have ventured into the area of exorcism, much to their own loss and detriment. These healers have foolishly underestimated the adversary’s wiles and power, and assumed to themselves authority not theirs. Adopting an aggressive attitude, these would-be exorcists rashly engage in “face-to-face” confrontation and “hand-to-hand” combat with the powers of darkness, “commanding” or “rebuking” the unseen opponent with words of (non-existent) authority.

This is utterly opposed to the biblical instruction on how we are to deal with the devil and his evil spirits. Ephesians 6:10-18 gives clear guidelines on how to engage in spiritual warfare. We must use God’s prescribed weapons which alone can shield us from the forces of darkness. On no account must a believer (pastor or anybody else) make contact with or attack an evil spirit. Not even Michael the archangel dared to confront the devil (Jude 9). All he did was to say, “*The Lord rebuke thee.*”

How foolish for anyone to directly address the devil and to use “a railing accusation” against him! One would-be exorcist tangled with a demon-possessed person and used “railing accusation” against the demon for many months. The final score: the possessed person was no better and no worse; the “exorcist” a near physical and spiritual wreck. The demon: alive and well. (He is smarter than we think!)

What lesson can we all learn? Firstly, leave demons and evil spirits alone. We must have no contact or confrontation with them. Live a pure and holy life. Keep close to the Lord. Submit at all times to the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. Then no evil spirit can ever harm us.

THOUGHT: Resist, not confront, the devil and he will flee from me.

PRAYER: Lord, keep me always in Thy peace.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 1

ISAIAH 57:13-19

GALATIANS 5:16-21

*Is your spiritual life
growing or going?*

THE SPIRIT LEADING (I)

Our hearts are by nature inclined to worldly things. By our own instincts and appetites we are drawn away from the things of God. From the moment of birth we follow the worldly trend and gratify our senses with passing pleasures. Even after our conversion, this natural tendency and worldly inclination persist to a greater or lesser degree. We know it, we feel it and we hate it! We struggle against it, but by our own strength, our striving is losing! We need the almighty power of the Spirit to turn our hearts and lead us in another direction.

Only God's Spirit in us can perfect this great work of weaning our inner man away from the desires and lusts of the flesh. The Spirit must show us the utter futility of setting our affections on things of the world. He must open our eyes and understanding to the vision of a perishing world with all its lusts and attractions. Seeing this we bow before His Word of truth that if we continue to love the world, the love of the Father is not in us; and that the world is shortly to pass away. But the real life is in doing the will of God (1 John 2:15-17). Pray then and submit to the Spirit and follow His leading into the real life – the life of lasting peace and unending pleasures with God. This is the blessed condition each of us must strive for. And nothing but the Spirit can effect the change of heart which must precede the change of direction. *"And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes..."* (Ezek 36:27). This is our God's promise, and He will do it if we will not rebel against His will.

Let us pray then and yearn for the Spirit's leading. By His almighty and invincible power the Spirit persuades and induces us most gently, for He is gentle as a dove. He never forces us against our will, never uses any physical force. Sometimes chiding, sometimes chastening, but always with love, the blessed Holy Spirit inclines our hearts toward Himself – by His Word, by faithful preaching, by the turn of events and circumstances. Then He leads on towards the perfect day and we will gladly follow.

THOUGHT: (Read Psalm 23:3.)

PRAYER: Lord, grant me the joy of following Thy leading.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2

ROMANS 8:14-15

PSALM 23

*Lord's Day observance
begins today!*

THE SPIRIT LEADING (II)

It is the office of the Holy Spirit in the covenant of redemption, after He has called us out of the world, to lead us until the journey's end. He knows the path which leads to Heaven. It is not an easy path. He knows the difficulties and dangers along the way, the pitfalls and deceptive turns which Satan has cunningly contrived for our downfall.

In His infinite grace, the Spirit stands at the head of the great company of strangers and pilgrims, and leads them ever onwards in the path of safety and peace. Steadfastly, unswervingly and lovingly, He conducts us safely to our Celestial City. O, what praise and gratitude is due to this heavenly Guide! How gladly and thankfully should we obey His voice and follow His direction! Truly, without Him we would fall!

This chorus by Sidney Cox beautifully expresses our theme:

*My Lord knows the way through the wilderness
– All I have to do is follow.
Strength for today is mine all the way,
And all I need for tomorrow;
My Lord knows the way through the wilderness
– All I have to do is follow!*

To be led by the Spirit does not mean that we are to be pulled in any or every direction by all and sundry impulses and suggestions that may come our way. Haphazard reading of God's Word, on the spot "promptings of the Spirit," random pickings of verses out of the Bible, visions and prophecies, utterance in tongues – these are not the ways of the Holy Spirit. We have one sure guide by which we know the Spirit's leading: the understanding of God's written Word, the Bible, by careful, devotional study with much prayer and communion in secret before God. We may rely on such promptings received at the holy Throne of Grace to be the Spirit's leading for us.

THOUGHT: (Read Romans 8:16.)

PRAYER: Lead me daily into deeper communion with Thee, O God.

THE SPIRIT LEADING (III)

There has been a great proliferation among those in the "Holy Spirit Renewal" groups of "prophecies and revelations from the Lord." Things are said and done, rightly or wrongly, by those who are "led by the Spirit." How can we know whether such claims are authentic? One good guide is to examine each claim in the light of Scripture. Is it in accord with God's Word? Is there anything which contradicts the Word, and is not of the truth?

We should subject the claims to detailed scrutiny, asking ourselves the following questions if we claim to be "led by the Spirit":

1. Is it "self-abasing"? The Holy Spirit leads us away from ourselves, from self-confidence in our own ability, wisdom, strength and righteousness. The Spirit leads us away from self-will, self-satisfaction, and self-glorification. It is "more of Christ, less of self. He must increase, I must decrease." If the Spirit is leading, He will wean us from our self-importance along a perpetual and progressive pathway, so that eventually it will be "all of Christ, none of self."
2. Is Christ exalted? If the Spirit is in control, His function is to testify of Christ (John 15:26) and glorify Him (John 16:14). The Spirit's leading must give us a closer realization of our union with the Saviour. He is our Head, we are but members. It must increase our consciousness of our own failings and faults. The Spirit causes us to mourn for our sins and to flee to Christ for cleansing so that we may be made more like Him.
3. Are we led along the highway of holiness? The Spirit leads us away from the vanities and seductive lures of the world, and points us to the Altogether Lovely One. He turns us away from the husks and ashes of the world to the riches of Christ in glory. He sets our affections on things above and not on things on earth. He opens our eyes to see the awfulness of sin, its filth and abomination, then He causes us to turn our feet from even the slightest sin that may grieve the Lord. He leads us to separate from sin and the world, and make Christ our lifelong delight.

THOUGHT: Am I being led by God's Spirit, or some other spirit?

PRAYER: Lead me, O God, by Thy Spirit, to the Rock that is higher than I.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 4

ROMANS 8:14-23

GALATIANS 4:1-5

*Serve the Lord with
clean hands and pure heart.*

THE SPIRIT OF ADOPTION

In my experience as a gynaecologist, one of the happiest families I have seen is that of an infertile couple who adopted two children, a boy and a girl. From the moment they came under their roof, the couple showered them with love and devotion as their very own flesh and blood. As for the children, they had found a wonderful pair of parents from whom they received the full status of son and daughter, eventually coming into the inheritance of the family estate.

We are children of God by adoption. Whereas we were once *"aliens... and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope... But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ... Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God"* (Eph 2:12, 13, 19).

It is the highest honour and most wondrous privilege to be adopted into God's family and to have the Lord as our Father. You ask, "How can I know that my adoption is a fact? What assurance and confirmation do I have?" To answer this question we turn to Romans 5:5: *"... because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."* By His great gift and act of love God is saying to us, "You are now my sons and daughters. Have no fears. I have given you my own Spirit, the Spirit of adoption."

When God's Son became man, God the Father showed that He is His Son by sending the Holy Spirit as a dove descending upon Him. Then the Father's voice from Heaven declared, *"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"* (Matt 3:17). Thus the Father accorded His Son public recognition. By the same token, God manifests His love to us His children by sending us the indwelling Spirit so that we are enabled to cry, "Abba, Father!" By this we know that we are the children of God, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ (Rom 8:15-17). What a salvation is ours!

THOUGHT: On what grounds did God give us the Spirit of adoption?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, make me Thy true and filial child.

SEALED BY THE SPIRIT (I)

As believers, we have a share in the unsearchable riches of God in our Lord Jesus Christ. These riches are based solely on the promises of God, and “... *all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen...*” (2 Cor 1:20). Our faith in Christ must be securely built upon these divine promises. This faith must not be shaken by the wiles of the evil one who seeks ever to cause us to waver. How can we stand against the attacks of our adversary? How can a young Christian be assured that his faith will survive any trials and testings?

Any reader who needs help in this area, fear not! God who saved you out of the hold of Satan is well able to deliver you from his further attacks. Let God’s Word be your stay: “...*He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ*” (Phil 1:6). Our God will see you through! Listen: “*Now he which stablisheth us... and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts*” (2 Cor 1:21-22).

God our Saviour in His infinite wisdom has provided the means of making our faith secure (“*stablisheth*”) so that it will withstand all trials. He has “*anointed*” us (i.e. “given us royal accreditation”), so that we belong to Him. Next, He has “*sealed*” (confirmed) us, with divine approval. Finally, He has given us the “*earnest*” of His Spirit in our hearts, the absolute security that the promise of “*unsearchable riches*” (Eph 3:8) will be ours.

God the Holy Spirit in your heart is the assurance that your faith, though weak and at times faltering, will never fail for He has anointed and sealed you. In moments of testing, cry to Him and trust in Him. Your only security and assurance is in the blessed Spirit Comforter; not in any man or priest, not in any church or system or movement. God’s promises in Christ are secured to you. They are yea and Amen – absolutely sure, beyond doubt!

THOUGHT: The anointing and sealing of the Spirit do not prevent doubts from arising, but give assurance that prevails over doubts.

PRAYER: Lord, I trust Thee that Thou wilt keep me as the apple of Thine eye.

SEALED BY THE SPIRIT (II)

In the normal course of life today, almost everything of value can be insured against loss: houses, vehicles, estates, precious stones, rare works of art, musicians' hands, life and health, and so on. The clamour is for the assurance of material preservation of some treasured possession for the future. In the spiritual realm, assurance of our most treasured inheritance is equally relevant and infinitely more important.

Our salvation in Christ gives us an inheritance and possession precious beyond words. This is promised to us in God's Word which we have accepted by faith. Faith is believing what God says and taking God at His Word. At times our faith seems so weak and doubts begin to assail. It may be the pressure of modern living, the deceitful snare of riches, the temptations of the flesh – oh, so many of Satan's wiles that come our way. A young believer or even a mature Christian under stress may wonder, "Is my faith genuine? Are God's promises real? Is it worth going on with Christ?"

To express the problem in today's language, we want to know: "Is our salvation package insured? What assurance is there that in the end we shall receive the promised inheritance?" A reasonable question deserves a reasonable answer! The answer is in Ephesians 1:13-14. We shall paraphrase it for easier understanding:

- (a) you trusted in Christ after you heard the Word of truth,
- (b) you believed, and
- (c) you were sealed with the Holy Spirit.

This salvation process of "hearing the Gospel, believing, sealing by the Spirit" is absolutely assured. It is foolproof, INFALLIBLE! Call it an "insurance policy" if that will make some happy. Your salvation is signed and sealed by the GREAT UNDERWRITER OF OUR SOULS in His own blood. The Spirit of Promise, now residing in your heart, Himself assures you: "Doubt not. The Word is true. The Gospel promise is sure."

THOUGHT: Have I been sealed by the Spirit of Promise?

PRAYER: LLord, I believe. Help Thou my unbelief.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 7

ROMANS 8:16-17

PSALM 34:17-19

*Did I have
"soul food" today?*

THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT

It is nothing unusual or strange for a child of God, a true believer, to be troubled by doubt and insecurity concerning his salvation. For example, Satan is ever ready to sow seeds of fear and self-accusation in my heart so as to shake my faith in Christ. He will attack in moments of weakness or depression by reminding me of my past or even my present sinfulness. He questions my repentance by suggesting that it is not sincere and that God surely cannot forgive someone like me.

Is this your besetting problem? Are you sorely tried and troubled by such disturbing thoughts? Fear not! For each child, the Father in Heaven has provided the blessed Holy Spirit Comforter as our all-powerful and unassailable witness, and His witness dispels every evil suggestion of the enemy. The Spirit comes swiftly to our aid with His two-edged sword, the mighty Word: *"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God"* (Rom 8:16).

My spirit within has submitted to the Gospel. I have yielded myself – heart, soul and body – to Christ to be His life-long follower and servant. I have burnt all my idols. My spirit within knows all these to be true. Am I now a child of God? What is the answer? God my Redeemer supplies it: "My Spirit, the Comforter in you bears witness with your spirit that you are my child. Your spirit is weak, but my Spirit is omnipotent. He removes the evil darts of the devil. He is the infallible and true Witness."

Do you now see the light? It is not your feelings or the devil's suggestions that decide the issue. It is our blessed Witness! He speaks the truth, and the truth will make you free, free from unfounded fears and needless worries. The Spirit's witness is our sure defence. He is also our Advocate (1 John 2:1). He pleads our cause with the Father and Jesus Christ the righteous. The final witness of our Advocate assures us beyond all doubt: *"And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him"* (1 John 3:19).

THOUGHT: The Spirit's witness dispels all doubts and fears.

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Lord, for Thy unassailable witness.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 8

PSALM 77:1-12

ROMANS 8:26-31

Jesus is my Friend!

THE SPIRIT HELPING

It is a sad fact that many believers when faced with the cares and problems of everyday life will, under pressure, resort to doctors, psychiatrists, tranquilizers and sedatives. Not a few become nervous wrecks. It would not be wrong to say that most of today's psychiatric and psychological ailments could have been prevented or ameliorated if genuine and earnest prayer had been employed in the first place. The best loved hymn by Joseph Scriven has a relevant message for those in trouble.

*What a Friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer
O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear.
All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer!*

Are we weak and heavy-laden, cumbered with a load of care? Answer: Yes, too many of us are weak and infirm, overloaded with worry and care. These are the infirmities which the Holy Spirit Comforter can help. Modern education and "high tech" curriculums fail to teach us how not to fret and fume or complain and murmur under stress, how not to groan and moan or become gloomy and depressed when things go wrong. All of us have these and other infirmities, the greatest of which is prayerlessness.

Our Lord knew well how infirm and unreliable the disciples were and how dependent they were on Him. So are we. "I will not leave you without a Helper. I will come to you." How marvellous His grace. He sent us the Comforter to be our constant and abiding Helper. Of this role John Calvin says: "The Spirit takes on himself a part of the burden, by which our weakness is oppressed; so that he not only helps and succours us, but lifts us up, as though he went under the burden with us."

Our infirmities shall ever be with us. But so is our Comforter ever present to help. Read what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12:9.

THOUGHT: (Read 1 Peter 5:7.)

PRAYER: Lord, give me a deeper ministry in prayer.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9

PSALM 25

ROMANS 8:26-28

*Let's serve the
Lord in His House.*

THE SPIRIT INTERCEDING

Prayer is the most powerful but least used means of grace freely available to all believers. A key that unlocks the windows of Heaven, it seems altogether too heavy an instrument to lift. Many believers are so encumbered with the cares of this life that they find their prayer lives heavy and burdensome, to their own detriment and loss.

To the aid of such needy souls comes our blessed Comforter. Read Romans 8:26. This is the experience of every true child of God: we have all received needed assistance from the Comforter in our prayer life. He who is stranger to the Spirit's help is still a stranger to true prayer.

Look back, and recall the times when prayer time was blotted out by every call from dawn till dusk. Everything and everyone claimed and received your attention. Then one day the gracious Spirit stirred within you, in the very depths of your being, caused your desire to turn to the Father, and the Spirit opened your eyes to see your sin of prayerlessness. Softly and tenderly the Comforter reminded you. "Child, the Father awaits at His throne of grace." With gentle pleading the Spirit touched your soul, and caused you to respond.

O, how we thank the Spirit for His patience and longsuffering, for turning our hearts in repentance to the Father. Thank the Comforter for giving us the appetite for prayer, and for teaching us to pray for the right things – the spiritual things. Thank Him for stirring our hearts with deep contrition, causing us at times to weep and groan for our sins. Thank Him that even though no words escaped our mouth, He knows our every thought and desire, and every acceptable request was transmitted to the Father.

O blessed thought, that God our Saviour is also our Comforter and Helper, praying with us and for us!

THOUGHT: Is my prayer life growing or going?

PRAYER: Make me an intercessor, Lord.

THE SPIRIT TRANSFORMING

When we came to the Lord in salvation we received the Holy Spirit into our hearts. There He began a new work in our lives, to change us into the image of our Lord. This moral transformation is a gradual and sometimes slow and painful process. Nevertheless it is present in every truly saved person and its features may be identified by careful and honest self-examination:

- (1) God's law is accepted as the rule of life. There is a radical change in one's attitude towards God's holy commandments. Whereas the unregenerate man hates and despises the law, the child of God embraces it heartily and says, "*O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day*" (Ps 119:97). The law of God has become his delight. "*And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments*" (1 John 2:3).
- (2) There is a sorrowing for sin. The regenerated soul sees his own life under the spotlight of God's law and realizes how far short he has fallen of God's righteous requirements. He realizes that he is carnal, sold under sin (Rom 7:14). Therefore there is a sense of unworthiness, self-loathing and godly sorrow. He mourns for his sins and flees to the Saviour for renewed cleansing.
- (3) There is genuine humility. Quickening by the Spirit brings a sense of genuine humility. All proud and high thoughts of self are dismissed. He sees his imperfection and his lack of love for God. This fills him with low and humble thoughts of himself. Like the publican he cries, "*God be merciful to me a sinner*" (Luke 18:13).
- (4) Increasing reverence for God. The more a believer grows in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, the more will he come to appreciate the infinite holiness, majesty, sovereignty and power of God. He is mortified to realize that it was his sin that sent Jesus to the cross. He is overwhelmed when he contemplates the amazing grace and mercy of God to a wretched sinner like him.

THOUGHT: What can hinder the Spirit's transforming work?

PRAYER: Lord, make me more like the Master.

THE SPIRIT KEEPING

The church of the redeemed has been bought at great price and it is the Father's will that it should be preserved whole until the day when we shall be presented to the Lord *"a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish"* (Eph 5:27). How can this be, seeing that ahead of us lies an uncertain pathway with many pitfalls and hidden dangers? Our confidence is not in man or in ourselves but in the Lord. We believe that He who has begun a good work in us will perform or finish it until the day of Jesus Christ (Phil 1:6).

Our texts today speak of what the Holy Spirit did in the past for Israel, and what He will do for us in the future. *"He found him in a desert land... he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye"* (Deut 32:10). What a marvelous preservation that God the Holy Spirit worked for Israel in forty years of wilderness wandering. A no less wonderful preservation is ours as we put our trust in Him, for we are *"... kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time"* (1 Pet 1:5).

This last verse is of particular encouragement to us as we see ominous signs of our Lord's return approaching. In 1 Peter 1:7, we read of the coming trial of our faith *"... being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire..."* But we are assured that in spite of every trial, we shall be kept *"... without spot, and blameless"* (2 Pet 3:14), until our Lord returns. This is by the power of the blessed Spirit who will see us safely through.

The tempests of life, the lure of the world, the lust of the flesh, the rising wind of false doctrine, the peril of lukewarmness – all these threaten our progress. But we are not alone! Our Comforter in us and walking by our side will protect us and guide us into all truth. He will bring to remembrance all the words of the Lord. And we *"... through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith"* (Gal 5:5). It is a glorious hope and a blessed hope! The Spirit will keep us till the end!

THOUGHT: He loves, He saves, He keeps!

PRAYER: Lord, keep me in Thy perfect path of righteousness.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12

ISAIAH 59:16-19

JUDE 3-4

...then walk with God

THE SPIRIT CONTENDING

“Salvation is of the LORD” (Jon 2:9) declared Jonah from the ocean depths. We echo with a chorus of voices of the *“seven thousand in Israel”* whose knees have not bowed unto Baal (1 Kings 19:18) and whose mouths have not kissed the ecumenical idol. Salvation is of the Lord! Not by the might of ecumenical union, nor by the power of people politics, but by my Spirit, says the Lord (Zech 4:6).

Our God is a God of War. Or did you always think of Him as a gentle dove, benignly flapping His wings over the heads of Holy Spirit Renewal groups, dancing, shouting Hallelujahs with uplifted hands? O return to the Word and be wise! *“Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle”* (Ps 24:8).

The Lord fights for the honour of His name. Isaiah saw a great falling away of the nation into destruction and captivity. Humanly speaking there was no hope for Israel. The enemy was in full control. But salvation is of the Lord! The Lord's name shall never suffer damage. He arises to save! Read Isaiah 59:19.

Today churches have fallen away, captured by the forces of Liberalism, Modernism, Neo-Evangelicalism, Charismaticism, Romanism, and Ecumenism. Led by archbishops and popes, deluded millions have been captivated by the dream and vision of universal brotherhood and peace through OIKOUMENE, One World.

But we, and the *“seven thousand in Israel”* who stand with us, declare, *“Salvation is of the Lord! Not by might, nor by power, but by His Spirit!”* Jude 3 says that we are to *“earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”* The enemy has come in one great ecumenical flood. But God's Spirit has lifted up a standard against him. The Spirit contends for us! Fear not, He is with us!

THOUGHT: Am I willing to stand under the Lord's standard?

PRAYER: Lord, raise up more to join the faithful *“seven thousand”*!

THE EARNEST OF THE SPIRIT

When we received Christ as our Saviour, we entered into a covenant with God, making us heirs to an everlasting inheritance, with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. The full weight of the glory of our inheritance cannot be fully grasped now, but the day will reveal it. Until our eventual entering into the promised inheritance, we sojourn on earth as *“strangers and pilgrims”* (Heb 11:13).

Our sojourn is a time of testing of our faith, of our steadfastness in the face of difficulties and setbacks. In the weakness of our flesh some may falter or faint along the way. Some may even grow weary and give up. Our God understands our problem and He comes to our aid to strengthen us in the faith. He *“stablisheth us,” “anointed us,” “sealed us,”* and gave us *“the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts”* (2 Cor 1:21-22).

What do we understand by *“the earnest of the Spirit”*? In business language it is called a “down payment.” But the usage here is not quite the same. In a normal transaction, the buyer makes the down payment (usually ten per cent) as a token of good faith. Then a few weeks later he pays the balance, and he enters into his possession.

In God’s transaction, our coming into His family entitles us to an inheritance, for which we pay nothing! Now in order to assure us that the inheritance is truly ours, our Heavenly Father sends us His Spirit to indwell our hearts as His “down payment” or *“earnest.”* This is truly “grace upon grace.” The blessed Spirit leads us, enables us to cry Abba, Father, and bears witness with our spirit that we are indeed the children of God.

With God’s Spirit indwelling us, need you fear even if things do not go well or go against you? Need you feel “down” because of tribulation and suffering? The Spirit within enables you to bear all trials and burdens. He assures you, “If you suffer with Him, you will be also glorified with Him.”

THOUGHT: (Read Romans 8:18.)

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Lord, for the indwelling of the Spirit in me.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14

JOHN 15:1-8

PSALM 1

*Is mine a "trusty" Sword
or a rusty sword?*

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT (I)

It is the longing and desire of God the Father that we bear fruit for Him. He expects it of every true child. Don't you think this is reasonable? A Christian who has no fruit proves himself false and worthless, good only for the fire. So he will be "cast forth as a branch" and burnt (John 15:6). Jesus says, *"I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing"* (John 15:5).

The "fruit of the Spirit" does not mean any sort of charitable works. Men in society, "do-gooders," philanthropists and others engage in every kind of social relief, benevolent aid, homes for orphans and old people, etc. While society is benefitted and such works are needful and appreciated, nevertheless they are not the fruit of the Spirit. Only those who have been born of the Spirit can bear the fruit of the Spirit.

The question is: "Are you a child of God, born of the Spirit and joined to the body of Christ?" God's Words says, *"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members... are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body... and have been all made to drink into one Spirit"* (1 Cor 12:12-13). The Spirit is the vital link between us and Christ: it is He who baptizes us into the body of Christ; it is He who gives us to drink of His life-giving water. It is the Spirit who joins us to Christ, like branches to the vine. Without God's Spirit, this union can never take place, but once joined, the life-giving sap of divine life begins to flow and circulate from Jesus to us. Only then can we bear fruit.

Fruit-bearing is not a product of the flesh. We cannot bear the fruit of the Spirit by our own will power, good resolution or determination. Fruit-bearing implies a surrender of one's will to the Spirit. We hand over the control of our life to the Spirit, and let Him energize us and motivate and empower us. Then, and only then, will the fruit of the Spirit appear. Men seeing our fruit will know that Christ lives in us.

THOUGHT: The fruit of the Spirit comes from a Spirit-controlled life.

PRAYER: Lord, may I be empowered to be fruitful for Thee.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 15

ISAIAH 44:2-6

GALATIANS 5:22-25

Enoch walked with God;

God took him.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT (II)

The fruit of the Spirit is sweet, wholesome and delightful. Believers who produce the fruit of the Spirit glorify the Master. Galatians 5:22-23 enumerates nine of the graces which together form the fruit of the Spirit. These nine may be divided into three groups:

- (a) love, joy, peace: our Godward graces,
- (b) longsuffering, gentleness, goodness: our manward graces,
- (c) faith (fidelity), meekness, temperance: our inward graces.

Love flows from God, for God is love. It is God's love in us that moves us to love Him and our fellowmen. Joy arises from reconciliation with God, communion with Christ, service to God and in the hope of Heaven. Peace comes from the knowledge of sins forgiven, debts cancelled, guilt removed and conscience at rest. Longsuffering is patient forbearance when provoked or injured, not aggressive or fault-finding. Gentleness refers to a kind and tender disposition. Goodness is to seek the benefit of others without thought of reward. Faith, fidelity or faithfulness means being trustworthy, honest and keeping to one's word. Meekness implies self-abasement and genuine humility. Temperance is moderation and self-control.

"The Fruit of the Spirit is an affectionate, lovable disposition, a radiant spirit and a cheerful temper, a tranquil mind and a quiet manner, a forbearing patience in provoking circumstances and with trying people, a sympathetic insight and tactful helpfulness, generous judgment and a big souled charity, loyalty and reliableness under all circumstances, humility that forgets self in the joy of others, in all things self-mastered and self-controlled.... It is not by striving, but by abiding; not by worrying, but by trusting; not of works, but of faith" (S. Chadwick).

But we have also a responsibility to cherish and cultivate our graces, and to reject everything which opposes or hinders them. Keep out the weeds; only then can we bring forth fruit in season.

THOUGHT: I need the illumination and teaching of the Holy Spirit.

PRAYER: Lord, please illumine me and teach me Thy Truth.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16

MATTHEW 3:7-17

JOEL 2:28-32

Tomorrow: emblem of eternal rest.

BAPTISM WITH THE SPIRIT (I)

“Baptism with the Holy Spirit” is a New Testament teaching and it has a clearly defined meaning and is of great spiritual significance. Every believer ought to understand it so that the term may not be misused or misapplied, for Christians at large today use it to mean what it is not. This leads to erroneous practices and confusion.

Firstly, let us look at water baptism. John the Baptist preached and baptized at the river Jordan. His message was, *“Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”* (Matt 3:2). Many were baptized by him, confessing their sins (Matt 3:2, 6). This is water baptism. Then recall our Lord’s final commandment to the disciples, just before His ascension: *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”* (Matt 28:19). Water baptism was for those who believed.

Notice now the significance of the rite. It was a token and symbol of repentance. It marked out the baptized person as one for admission into the kingdom of heaven. It was a once only, initiatory act not to be repeated. It was meant only for those who had repented and were regenerated by God’s Spirit. Our Lord was baptized by John the Baptist at the river Jordan for a different reason: It was to mark the commencement of His public ministry and to identify Himself, the sinless Son of God, with sinners He had come to save. As He said, it was *“to fulfil all righteousness”* (Matt 3:15).

Now, notice again: the ministry of John signaled the end of an old era as stated by our Lord: *“For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John”* (Matt 11:13). John brought to a close the period of the law and the prophets. Our Lord ushered in the new age of the era of the Church and Holy Spirit, a door shortly to be opened to all nations. Admission into the Church of those who believed was by baptism but with a difference: outwardly it was with water; in the heart it was with the Holy Spirit.

THOUGHT: Does regeneration come before, during, or after water baptism?

PRAYER: Lord, please sanctify my mind and use it for Thy glory.

BAPTISM WITH THE SPIRIT (II)

John the Baptist blazed a short and fiery course as the last great prophet of the old covenant. He was commended by our Lord in Matthew 11:11. John was the forerunner and herald of our Lord. He predicted that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Ghost (Matt 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33). Before His ascension, our Lord said, *"For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence"* (Acts 1:5). Both these predictions were fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. Let us trace how the prophecy was fulfilled. On that day, two events took place:

- (a) The Apostles were filled with the Holy Ghost by a great and unique outpouring, exactly fulfilling our Lord's prediction of Acts 1:5. These were already regenerated and were members of the body of Christ, having been baptized by the Holy Spirit at the point of conversion. The Holy Spirit by this filling at Pentecost identified them as members of the newborn Church of the New Testament and equipped them for the work ahead.
- (b) 3,000 converts received the first Gospel message preached by Peter. *"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost"* (Acts 2:38). They believed and were baptized with water as an outward sign of their inward faith.

In summary:

"Baptism with the Holy Spirit": (1) It occurs at the point of conversion. (2) It is a once only, initiatory experience, not to be repeated. (3) It is performed invisibly with the Holy Spirit, God's gift.

"Water baptism": (1) It is the New Testament rite marking the admission of a person into the visible church. (2) It is performed visibly with water. (3) It is the external mark of the convert's regeneration (an unseen work of the Spirit in the heart). (4) It is a post-conversion experience.

THOUGHT: Trusting in one's feelings is foolishness (Prov 28:26).

PRAYER: Lord, may I trust wisely in Thee and Thy Word alone.

BAPTISM WITH THE SPIRIT (III)

The expression "Baptize with the Holy Ghost" is used on just three occasions in the Bible. (a) By John the Baptist in his prediction concerning Jesus: "...*he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost*" (Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; Matt 3:11). (b) By our Lord on the day of His ascension: "...*ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence*" (Acts 1:5). (c) Peter describing his reaction to the conversion of Cornelius: "*Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost*" (Acts 11:16).

We must understand clearly how this promised "baptism with the Spirit" became a reality. It was secured and effected by Christ's perfect atoning work at Calvary, and His exaltation after His ascension. Peter explained this in Acts 2:33. It of course referred to the Spirit's downpouring at Pentecost.

Now the application: Who is to receive the "Baptism with the Spirit" promised by God the Father and on what grounds? Again we quote Peter's words to the assembled multitude at Pentecost: "*For the promise is unto you, and to your children... as many as the Lord our God shall call*" (Acts 2:39). The promise is for all whom the Lord shall call to salvation, into union with the exalted Christ: these shall be "*baptized with the Holy Ghost.*" And what was required to receive the gift? "*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*" (Acts 2:38). Every convert, every believer, is baptized with the Spirit at conversion, and not after. There is no second-stage experience, no interval of waiting, no second work of grace. In the case of Cornelius, the Gentiles received the gift even while Peter was still preaching. Jesus had baptized them with His Spirit. Therefore Peter proceeded to baptize them with water.

Conclusion: Baptism with the Spirit happens at conversion, not after.

THOUGHT: What makes the rite of water baptism effective?

PRAYER: I thank Thee, exalted Lord and Saviour, for Thy wondrous Gift.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 19

JEREMIAH 31:31-34

HEBREWS 8:10-13

God's Word is a lamp unto our feet.

BAPTISM WITH THE SPIRIT (IV)

When our Lord began His ministry, John's words of introduction by the river Jordan were most significant: *"I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost"* (Mark 1:8). John said in effect, "His ministry will be different."

Jesus came as the Mediator of the new covenant in His own blood (Heb 12:24) to take the place of the old covenant *"which decayeth and waxeth old"* and was *"ready to vanish away"* (Heb 8:13). His mediatorial work perfected, our Lord returned to the throne, and from thence poured forth His Spirit upon the Church in a mighty fashion, filling them with new life and raising them to a higher spiritual plane.

The effused Spirit came upon God's people, implanted God's law in their inward parts and wrote them in their hearts. Willingly and joyously, they translated these laws into action in their lives. Pentecost brought a presence of the Spirit unknown in times past, with a fuller realization of God's promises under the covenant of grace. Read again the account of changed lives at Pentecost: *"And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers... and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need"* (Acts 2:42-45).

Baptism with the Spirit brought unprecedented spiritual fervour, obedience to God's law, submission to authority, unity and love among members, devotion to the Lord and to spiritual things, liberality and care for one another. In a word: the believers' lives were transformed. They had been baptized with the Spirit.

THOUGHT: Do I willingly and joyously obey God's law?

PRAYER: Lord, make my life a "showcase" of Thy grace.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 20

ACTS 4:31-37

EPHESIANS 3:14-19

*When shall I come
and appear before God?*

FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT (I)

Being “filled with the Spirit” is not the same as “baptized with the Spirit.” Baptism with the Spirit takes place at the moment of conversion (1 Cor 12:13; Rom 8:9). It happens to a person once and once only. Filling with the Spirit is a measure of a believer’s spiritual vitality and poses a constant and almost daily challenge from the moment of conversion. The Bible contains not one single command to any man to be baptized with the Spirit, but it has repeated commands and exhortations to believers to be filled with the Spirit.

It is our Lord’s desire to see all believers filled with His Spirit. Before His departure, He promised the disciples, *“If I depart, I will send him unto you... ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me...”* (John 16:7; Acts 1:8). His command to His followers is: *“... be witnesses unto me... unto the uttermost part of the earth”* (Acts 1:8). This command applies to all Christians. To be an effective witness we need power – spiritual power. We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit to have that power.

Before they were filled with the Spirit, the disciples of Jesus were a weak, disunited, self-seeking, cowardly and fearful lot. Pentecost made all the difference. The disciples were instantly transformed as the Spirit filled them and they stood up as fearless witnesses for their physically absent Master, ready to lay down their lives. In a moment, they became new men, united behind a common cause, serving one common Lord, with all self-interest forgotten. When the Spirit came they became men possessed – transformed!

When filled with the Spirit, believers see the cause of Christ and the Gospel as paramount. The Spirit gives them power beyond themselves, *“strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man... that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend... the love of Christ... that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God”* (Eph 3:16-19). Filling with the Spirit enables believers to advance the cause of Christ in every situation of life.

THOUGHT: Followers of Jesus ought to be filled with His Spirit.

PRAYER: Lord, fill me then use me for Thy glory.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 21

1 CORINTHIANS 6:15-20

EPHESIANS 5:15-21

No Word, no light.

FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT (II)

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor 6:19-20). The Apostle’s words recall our Lord’s promise in John 14:16 and 18.

If I am indwelt by the Spirit, He should be in control of my life. If Christ is Lord at all, He should be Lord over all. He should be in charge of every area of my life: my plans, ambitions, speech, conduct, lifestyle, and my service for Him. Only then can my life be holy, acceptable unto God which is my reasonable service, for I am not my own – I have been bought with a price, redeemed by the Saviour’s blood. Should I then not gratefully and willingly present my body to the Lord, a living sacrifice, fully surrendered and yielded to Him?

This is the Apostle’s constant exhortation in his epistles. His message is: *“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit”* (Eph 5:18). Be not filled with the spirit of the vine and lose control of yourselves to the lusts of the flesh, for the spirit of the vine is the spirit of the world. If the spirit of the world is in control, then one’s life falls into every evil and carnal practice mentioned in Ephesians 4 and 5: the old man corrupt with deceitful lusts, corrupt communication, bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, malice, fornication, covetousness – all the works of the devil.

Let not any believer yield himself to the evil spirit, but to the Holy Spirit. We belong to God: He dwells within us. Yield Him full control of our lives. Be filled with His Spirit. Surrender to the blessed Holy Spirit every area of our life: our work, studies, family and private life, our business, recreation, entertainment, hobbies, and our worship and service for the Lord. When we are filled with the Spirit, He gives power! Power to glorify God in everything we do!

THOUGHT: (Read Philippians 4:13.)

PRAYER: Lord, help me to yield my life to Thy control.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 22

EXODUS 4:1-9

JOHN 20:30-31

With Christ, life is an endless hope.

WHY MIRACLES AND SIGNS?

Miracles, signs and wonders – the acts of God are not for curiosity or entertainment, but for a divine purpose. The “Holy Spirit Renewal” and Charismatic groups claim “miracles, signs and wonders” in great profusion, some of them bizarre and insulting to the intelligence. The question we must answer is, “What is the purpose of miracles?”

When God empowered a man to perform miracles, it was for the primary purpose of authenticating his ministry. Moses, the first miracle-worker, was called by God to deliver His people from Egypt. Moses expressed genuine fears (Exod 4:1). God gave him wonder-working powers to convince Hebrews and Egyptians alike.

Our Lord came on the Judaeen scene, a stranger from Galilee. How were His people to recognize Him as the Messiah sent from God? By mighty miracles He established His divine authority and credentials. Our Lord’s feeding the thousands of needy folks and His healing ministry were not meant to bring compassionate relief or to gather popular support. The primary purpose was to prove that Jesus was the Son of God. Read John 20:31 which states this clearly. The same principle applies to the acts of the Apostles. They had been sent forth to continue the Lord’s work and do greater works in the building up of the church. They had a message from the Lord, but who would believe them?

It was vital that their authority be firmly established, for Christ’s Church was to be built “*upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets*” (Eph 2:20). To this Apostolic band our Lord gave signs and wonders by which their status and authority were fully confirmed. Paul calls miracles “*the signs of an apostle*” (2 Cor 12:12). These signs identified the Apostles as special instruments of divine revelation, authoritative spokesmen for God and authors of Holy Scripture. Miracles and signs served the higher purpose of God.

THOUGHT: Are there Apostles in the church today?

PRAYER: Lord, grant me power always to glorify Thy name.

HOW TO TEST A MIRACLE

Not all “miracles” are the Holy Spirit’s work. Sorcerers, false prophets, faith healers, etc can perform counterfeit miracles. We must be discerning. Read 1 John 4:1 which sounds a warning.

- (1) Is the healer “of the Holy Spirit”? Of what spirit is the faith healer? Does he deny any of the basic fundamental truths of the Christ-ian faith? By the tree we know the fruit. A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit (Matt 7:18). If the tree is corrupt the fruit must be corrupt. Using this principle we ask, “What sort of miracles and healings are those claimed by Bible-denying, doctrine-denying Modernists, Liberals, New Evangelicals, Charismatics, Catholics?”
- (2) Are organic diseases being healed? Our Lord and the Apostles healed every form of organic disease (Matt 11:5). The healing was complete, instantaneous and spectacular. Today’s healings are vague, non-verifiable and subjective. Authentic healing of proven organic disease is not seen, although unsubstantiated claims abound. One of Singapore’s leading Char-ismatics wasted no time with his Charismatic faith healers when he discovered he had cancer but went straight for surgical removal!
- (3) Is the healing undeniable? The cures wrought by our Lord and the Apostles were arresting and astonishing. They were beyond doubt, completely undeniable. Peter healed a man lame from birth. All those who frequented the Temple know the man and no one could deny the miracle. The authorities were angered by the event. They hated the Apostles but they had to admit that something supernatural had happened.

Modern day miracle workers and faith healers claim that there is a return of the signs and wonders of Pentecost and Holy Spirit outpouring. Charismatic fervour carries the day with exulting crowds, clapping, singing, shouting, overflowing with tongues.

THOUGHT: Are my hobbies dedicated and sanctified to the Lord?

PRAYER: Lord, please keep my hobbies in Thy will and control.

NO FAITH, NO HEALING

Modern faith healers abound but genuine cures of pathologically certified organic disease are not seen. We are not disclaiming the subjective improvement in health that may result. What we seriously question is: "Is the faith healing genuine?"

Some faith-healers offer to heal by appealing for handkerchiefs or portions of garments to be sent – preferably with a gift of money. The article will be prayed over with "laying of hands" by the electronic preacher, then returned – without the money! Healing is assured the user of that article – but with this proviso that the healing will be according to the measure of the person's faith. What do you think of this sort of "pious robbery"? The "healer" accepts no responsibility if the person is not cured. The fault is his own lack of faith! What these confidence tricksters are saying is: more faith, more healing; no faith no healing! This sort of abominable doctrine must be exposed by the light of God's Word.

In the act of faith healing, we must consider (a) the healer's authenticity, (b) the subject's faith and (c) God's will. Regardless of (a) and (b), God may not heal the subject. It may just not be His will. This is the decisive factor. The subject's faith is the least important factor. Why do we say this? On the ground that our Lord and the Apostles healed all who sought their help (Matt 12:15; Acts 5:16) and these did not all have faith. How could a dead man like Lazarus manifest "faith"? In further refutation of the faith healers' vile theory, we cite the case of the Apostle Paul. Who would doubt that Paul was a man of great faith? Yet he was afflicted by his "*thorn in the flesh*." He prayed to the Lord thrice. But it was not removed. Lack of faith? Or, God's perfect will? The Lord's answer is in 2 Corinthians 12:7-9.

The Charismatics' incessant quest for physical well-being loses sight of the all-sufficiency of God's grace under all circumstances.

THOUGHT: What do I do when I am down with some sickness?

PRAYER: Lord, grant me Thy grace for my daily needs.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 25

PSALM 103:1-5

MATTHEW 8:5-10

"Thy Word is truth."

FEATURES OF CHARISMATIC HEALING

(abridged from "The Texts All Say No!")

by Dr Peter Masters, Sword and Trowel, 1987 No 1)

Many of the arguments advanced by the new charismatics in favour of their healing methods could easily sound convincing to young or unwary Christians... The reality is that not one of the texts which they cite supports their methods of healing, but Bible passages are constantly wrested away from their plain sense and obvious context...

To clarify matters, we define a Charismatic author as one who advocates a healing ministry which includes most of the following elements:

(1) Healers will usually claim to possess a personal healing gift, and will probably practise the laying on of hands or utter commands to heal the illness. (2) It is believed that (generally speaking) all Christians have a right to expect healing, as it is God's will and purpose that His people should be well. (3) Clairvoyant powers are involved, either because the healer receives a "word" from God about the illness without having previously met the sufferer, or because he receives a "word" from God about the prognosis so that he can pray in line with God's will. (4) Interaction with demons and exorcism are practised. (5) Sick people are "visualized" in a recovered state in order to effect the prayer of faith. (6) The Holy Spirit is dispensed or called down upon sufferers. (7) Trances or ecstatic states are induced to aid healing. (8) The "prayer of faith" is regarded as a prayer which is based upon an absolute certainty that God will heal.

By contrast, the traditional evangelical view is that all direct divine healing today is carried out by the Lord simply in answer to the prayers of His people. He no longer uses specially gifted people, but deals directly with the sufferer. Nor is there any promise of certain healing, for the Lord will act entirely in accordance with His sovereign, wise and perfect will, and sometimes it is His will to leave a burden of sickness upon His people.

THOUGHT: Does God promise to heal His people's every sickness?

PRAYER: Lord, keep me strong and useful for Thy service. Amen.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 26

PSALM 119:89-96

JUDE 3-4

Much prayer, much power!

VISIONS AND PROPHECIES (I)

Since the Apostles' time, men of God have believed that the Bible is complete. God's revelation to man was completed when the last book of the New Testament was written. The Bible we now have (thirty-nine Old Testament books and twenty-seven New Testament books) is complete, sufficient, inerrant, infallible and our final authority in all matters of faith and practice. Any attempts to add to the Bible by man claiming "new revelations" from God has resulted in the appearance of heretical groups and cults.

We maintain that the Bible which has stood the test of time must continue to be our only Guide Book. To allow any person to claim extra-biblical sources of "revelations" from God is to open the door to every kind of error and confusion into the Church. Charismatics are receiving "gifts of prophecy" and "visions" and claim direct revelation from God with messages relevant for the times.

One Charismatic leader, J. Rodman Williams, explained how their new revelation occurs: "In prophecy God speaks. It is as simple and profound and startling as that! What happens in the fellowship is that the word may suddenly be spoken by anyone present, and so, variously, a 'Thus says the Lord' breaks forth in the fellowship. It is usually in the first person (though not always), such as 'I am with you to bless you...'"

So here we see a "free-for-all" situation. "Anyone present" can break forth with some utterance and it is accepted on equal authority with the prophetic utterances of Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Peter, John, Paul and Jude! With hearty concurrence, the Charismatic members voice their "Thus saith the Lord" and accept whatever has been spoken as God's voice. No wonder the present chaos and confusion in Charismatic meetings.

Let all true believers hold to the Reformers' position: SOLA SCRIPTURA. God's Word only is our basis for authority.

THOUGHT: (Read Psalm 119:89.)

PRAYER: Lord, help me to rest secure in Thy Holy Word alone.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 27

JEREMIAH 14:13-16

ACTS 2:14-21

*God's Word is
the best soul cleanser.*

VISIONS AND PROPHECIES (II)

The following report appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald, February 9, 1987: "Oral Roberts raises \$1.6m. TULSA, Oklahoma, Sunday: The evangelist Oral Roberts, who told viewers of his Expect a Miracle television program that he would die unless he raised US\$4.5 million (A\$6.76 million) for medical missionary scholarships by March, has received US\$1.6 million..." This same self-acclaimed prophet is also reported to have seen a vision of Jesus, 900 feet tall, and that he had a long talk with the Lord who told him to build a medical school and to discover the cure for cancer. Other Charismatics have claimed having taken a trip to heaven and back, or having taken the Lord for a ride in their automobile!

The Charismatic scene blooms with visions, prophecies and "new revelations" and "direct communications" from God. What do you say when someone claims, "The Lord spoke to me last night"? Jeremiah encountered a similar situation and brought the matter to God. Read what the Lord said unto him in Jeremiah 14:14.

Modern prophets claim divine authority from Acts 2:17-18. Now these "Spirit-filled" Charismatics give their "prophecies" the Scriptural seal of "Thus saith the Lord" by which they extract donations from their followers by the tens of millions yearly. Many see them as prophets of the last days, receiving revelations even as the prophets of old (men like Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Peter and Paul), but with a difference: the biblical prophets did not extract money from their people, neither did they live in luxury apartments and travel like millionaires. All of them were poor suffering servants of God, burning out their lives for the Lord, even suffering death. Believers today may still receive visions and prophecies, but from the Holy Scriptures – inerrant, infallible, without ulterior motives.

THOUGHT: Young man to young lady: "I had a dream, the Lord told me to marry you!" What do I say to that?

PRAYER: Lord, give me visions from Thy Holy Book.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 28

PROVERBS 29:18

ACTS 16:6-10

Cleanse soul before body!

VISIONS AND PROPHECIES (III)

God gave His servant John Sung a vision of himself standing on a large wooden cross, as if it were a life-boat, floating on a sea of drowning people. Fired with compassion, John Sung reached out to them, pulling many a perishing soul to safety on the cross. This vision set the course for this servant of God. In fifteen flaming years he burnt out for the Lord, blazing the Gospel trail throughout the length and breadth of China and Southeast Asia, turning many to the Lord.

Holy Spirit revival came to Singapore in 1935 when John Sung opened his first series of Gospel meetings. His ministry was built on a two-prong thrust: Holy Spirit cleansing and Evangelism. Like John the Baptist, he fearlessly rebuked sin with a fiery message: “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance!” He challenged converts to (a) live holy lives, with daily QT (Quiet Time) devotion, and (b) witness for the Lord. As a result many gave their lives to serve the Lord.

Evangelistic zeal and missionary visions won the hearts of three young people as they listened to Dr Sung. When the call to consecration came, they responded. The man of God laid hands on them and many others, and prayed that the Lord would use them for the extension of His kingdom. The vision of lost souls rushing on to a Christless eternity fired the trio. In 1950, the Bible-Presbyterian Church of Singapore and Malaysia was born. The revival of 1935 in their hearts continued to fire them to go on for the Lord. The prophecy of God’s Word spoke to them: “*Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession*” (Ps 2:8).

THOUGHT: Go to the Bible for God’s revelations.

PRAYER: Lord, keep me ever faithful to the heavenly vision.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 29

ISAIAH 28:11-12

ACTS 2:1-12

You too should walk with God.

WHY TONGUES?

The tongues-speaking phenomenon at Pentecost has become the focal point of erroneous practices by the “Holy Spirit Renewal” or Charismatic movement. This pitfall can be largely avoided if attention is paid to careful study of the reason why tongues were spoken at Pentecost by the Apostles.

There are three occurrences of tongues-speaking explicitly recorded in the entire New Testament: in Acts 2, 10-11 and 19. In each of these three cases, God was opening the Gospel door to Gentiles for their admission to the infant Church as equals with the Jews. This was a historic event, particularly on the day of Pentecost, and the Jews had to be convinced that the acceptance of Gentiles was indeed the action of God and not man. To authenticate the message, God sent the miracle of tongues upon the Apostles at Pentecost, upon the Romans at the house of Cornelius, and upon the Gentile believers at Ephesus.

In each of these three instances, Jews were present to witness the miracle. At Pentecost the returned overseas Jews from a dozen different cities in the eastern Mediterranean region heard in their own languages *“the wonderful works of God”* (Acts 2:11). The Gospel message, as it were, was being broadcast in a dozen Gentile languages, “beamed” to those Gentile countries: “God has offered salvation to all the world! A new age of grace has dawned!”

This miraculous manifestation was to unlock the minds of converted Jews to the fact that, in Christ, all nations were included in God’s salvation. Such a stupendous miracle occurred only three times in the entire New Testament period (as far as the records show). Today the Charismatics claim to be speaking the tongues of Pentecost, but they speak no known language, only unintelligible sounds – “gibberish.” And they do it at any time, every time, as often as they fancy, and altogether, in concerto – a confused, chaotic cacophony of senseless sounds.

THOUGHT: Has biblical tongues-speaking been witnessed today?

PRAYER: Lord, help me always to praise Thee with my tongue.

WHAT TONGUES?

Tongues-speaking is the central feature of the Charismatic phenomenon. It is therefore worthy of a closer look. The question we must answer is, “What tongues were spoken, then and now? Is there any resemblance between the Charismatic utterances and those spoken at Pentecost?”

First, at Pentecost only known and intelligible languages foreign to the Galilean Apostles were spoken, and clearly understood by about twelve foreign language groups. Today’s tongues are NOT languages or any language, human or angelic. The utterances are classified as “gibberish” which means simply rubbish. Next, Charismatics claim that their “tongues” is the “*tongues of angels*,” quoting Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:1. But Paul was only making a point in his argument that love is Number One among Christian virtues. He was saying, “No matter how good you may be in talking – even if you could talk angel talk – but have no love, you are simply a lot of noise.”

This claim that tongues are “ecstatic language” or “angel talk” can be subjected to critical analysis. Dr William Samarin, professor of linguistics at the University of Toronto throws light on the problem. He comments: “Over a period of five years I have taken part in meetings in Italy, Holland, Jamaica, Canada and the United States. I have observed old-fashioned Pentecostals and neo-Pentecostals; I have been in small meetings... in mammoth public meetings... I have interviewed tongue speakers, and tape recorded and analyzed countless samples of tongues. In every case, glossolalia turns out to be linguistic nonsense. ... glossolalia is fundamentally not language.” (Source: “Tongues of Men and Angels” by William J. Samarin, Macmillan Co, New York, 1972, pp 103-128)

It is convenient for Charismatics to take refuge behind absent angels who are not here to defend themselves. In all biblical accounts, angels always spoke in a language understood by the hearers!

THOUGHT: Why is there a profusion of tongues in modern days?

PRAYER: Lord, help me daily to thank Thee with my tongue.

A FALLING AWAY

God's Word foretells of a "*falling away*" or great apostasy in the Church before our Lord's return (2 Thess 2:3). This "falling away" movement will be headed by a man who puts himself in the place of God, "*whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders*" (2 Thess 2:9).

This "falling away" movement, from all evidences, appears to be the Ecumenical Movement led by the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church. The drawing together of the members of these two bodies has been significantly helped by the Charismatic movement which has adherents in both Protestant and Catholic churches. Mammoth "Holy Spirit Renewal" rallies have brought together all shades of Christians: liberals, modernists, new evangelicals, Catholics, cultists and others, in ecstatic effusion of tongues, in affectionate embrace, raising of hands, jubilant "dancing in the spirit" and loud "Hallelujahs!"

The question that naturally arises is: Does the Holy Spirit promote the fellowship of truth with error? Light with darkness? Protestants with Catholics? Liberals with evangelicals? Everywhere the Charismatics are reporting "loving, warm, affectionate fellowship" among all sorts and shades of Christians. The common bond is their "Spirit gifts" of tongues and prophecies, healings and "Hallelujahs."

The main objective of practically all the Charismatic groups is ecumenical. Leading Charismatic David du Plessis spearheaded the return to Rome movement. His ambition: to work for the formation of a One-World Church under the Pope. He saw great hope in the erasing and removing of issues which divide the different parts of Christendom. Such a move received warmest support from the Pope and other ecumenical leaders. Following this trend many leading evangelicals in the Charismatic movement also enthusiastically fall in line with the Rome-ward crowd. And the Rome-ward march continues. The "Holy Spirit Movement" is of another spirit!

THOUGHT: (Read 2 Corinthians 11:4.)

PRAYER: Lord, keep me faithful to Thy truth.

Notes

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