

## **The Believer and the Spirit**

### **III. - The Function of the Holy Spirit**

***“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God”*** (Romans 8:16).

***“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance against such there is no law”*** (Galatians 5:22, 23).

There is much confusion about what the Holy Spirit is supposed to do for human beings. Many see Him as something of a “magic elixir” to cure all human ills, including personality problems. In fact, the use of such phrases as “the baptism of the Holy Spirit” or “the outpouring of the Holy Spirit” gives the impression that the Holy Spirit is more of a Divine ministration than a Person. He is often referred to as “it.”

The reality of the matter is that the Holy Spirit occupies our spirit—establishing a continual communion with the Godhead. Paul emphasizes this point in Romans 8:26—*Likewise also the Spirit assists us in our weaknesses; for we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with unuttered sighs [zephyrs]; and He who searches the heart knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because he meets God on behalf of the saints* (Romans 8:26, 27). Thus there is communication between the Holy Spirit within us and the Godhead, on a continual basis, apart from our own human mental participation. Many times things have transpired in our lives for which we have not prayed and yet we have seen them as obvious help from God. This, of course, is one of the great functions of the Holy Spirit within us.

Furthermore, in a very deep sense the Holy Spirit gives a silent witness that we are the children of God, beyond our own feelings. Thus, in periods of doubt and distress there is still a very deep realization that Christ is there.

So the Spirit becomes a very essential part of our being and not some “additive” from the Deity to solve earthly ills. In this sense, He goes deeper than our human personalities and expresses himself outwardly in ways that often bypass our own human thought process. Thus, for example, first fruit of the Spirit mentioned is love. This is a deep underlying caring that expresses itself beyond our human emotions. Thus, Paul says *“for the love of Christ constrains [compels] me . . .”* (II Corinthians 5:14). In this respect he indicates that a force from within his spirit reaches out to others beyond himself. And this is the sense in which we must view the so called “fruits of the Spirit.” Paul does not say that these are traits that we ought to acquire if we have the Holy Spirit, but are rather inevitably true when we have the Holy Spirit. Our human intellect and feelings do not always participate in these realities of the Spirit within. Thus, for example, the joy expressed here is a word that has to do with an inner sensitivity to Divine benevolence within us and not with any feelings of elation or bliss. Jesus expressed this on his way to the cross—*“These things have I spoken to you that my joy might remain in you . . .”* (John 15:11). And just so, the other fruits. Peace does not have to do with our earthly circumstances, but with an inner flow of harmony with God in spite of the circumstances. Faith has to do with the energy of Christ flowing within us, and not with any feelings of

trust or confidence exhibited by our human thought process. Temperance—*egkrateia*—has to do with inner strength and means that we have inner resources provided by the Spirit to cope with the issues of life. And so with all of the other traits—Paul is talking about inner resources that are there by reason of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Our human feelings and actions often obscure the reality of these traits, but we find that when they are needed, they do surface in spite of ourselves.

The main function of the Holy Spirit within us is to restore us to our oneness with God and to make us partakers of the Divine Nature. It is not to give us power to perform special earthly deeds. These special deeds may be accomplished, but they are not the primary purpose of His Presence within us. It is through the Holy Spirit that we are restored to the original intention of God for us—to be part of His eternal kingdom. We receive the Presence of the Holy Spirit in us when we are “reborn.” We do not have to go through any human struggles to acquire this Presence. Some see the receiving of the Holy Spirit as a very special reward for outstanding human achievement. But how can one engage in human achievement apart from the Holy Spirit? Or, how can one believe in the first place? The Holy Spirit does aid us continually in our maturation process, but from the moment we are reborn, we have His Spirit with us. Tragically, many believers go through their entire lives struggling with the concern about receiving the Holy Spirit, when they could enjoy the peace that comes from realizing His Eternal Presence. Those who see the Spirit as part of the inner personality of the human process cannot, *de facto*, ever really rest from the struggle, inasmuch as no matter what the human achieves, he must press on to higher goals.

The self is never satisfied. But the believer relies on the Spirit of Christ for his strengths and finds Him satisfied. *“Now the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus that Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect [mend and restore] in every good thing to do His will, working in you [energizing you] with that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever”* (Hebrews 13:20, 21). And again, Paul declares to Titus, *“After that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; that being justified by His grace we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life”* (Titus 3:4-7).

It is the Divine side of salvation that gives us our ultimate hope and not our human responses or aspirations. If our salvation were dependent upon our own actions or feelings, our hope would be vain.

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