

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

PRAYER

I. INTRODUCTION

Well, good morning, brothers and sisters. Yikes, I see we may need an extra dose of the Spirit this morning. So why don't we start with a question: who knows who Shai Linne is? Shai wrote these words in one of his songs called "Mercy & Grace," in it Shai raps; I'm not gonna rap, Shai raps, but he says:

*It's quite amazing how in salvation
Each person of the Trinity contributes like a compilation
The Father elected me, Jesus bled for me
And regeneration is the Holy Spirit's confirmation*

Now why should Shai be amazed at that? And what in the world is the Holy Spirit's regeneration? Well let me go ahead and summarize the Holy Spirit's work; this will be point two on the front of your hand out.

II. SUMMARY

Theologian Anthony Hoekema put it like this: "*The Holy Spirit brings to completion the plan of the Father, through the application of the Word and the benefits of the Son, by acting upon and in the creature.*"

Now that's not necessarily the most catchy summary, but it's useful for two reasons.

First, it helpfully highlights the work of the Spirit in a *Trinitarian* way. Too often the work of the Spirit is divorced from the work of the Father and the Son. The Spirit is dubbed as that mysterious but exciting member of the Trinity doing all that unpredictable stuff, so we relegate him to his own nerf gym where he can bounce off the walls. But *biblically* the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not doing different things. Rather, they are working out the one plan of God. We see this clearly in texts like **John 15:26** "**When the Counselor comes (Spirit), whom I**

(Jesus) will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.” Broadly speaking, the Father authors, the Son accomplishes, and the Spirit applies. They’re three persons, but one God, and their activities represent a unified work.

Second reason that definition from Hoekema is helpful: it highlights the work of the Spirit as *Christological*. In other words, the Spirit’s work is centered on Jesus. The chief role of the Holy Spirit in our salvation is to make us one with Christ. He unites us to Christ, and all the blessings that come with that union (regeneration, conversion, adoption, etc.). That’s why the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Christ (Rom 8.9; 1Pet 1.11), and the Spirit of God’s Son (Gal 4.6). To participate in the Spirit is to participate in Christ (Rom 8.9-11).

Any understanding of the Spirit that isn’t Trinitarian and Christological in this way, far from uplifting the Spirit — dishonors him. It simply isn’t Christian. That’s why we begin *biblically* defining what the Spirit is.
Comments, questions?

III. THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Go ahead and flip to the inside of your hand out; we’re at point 3. Starting in the OT, where do you think the Holy Spirit first shows up?

Genesis 1:1–3 “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the *Spirit of God* was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.”

So let’s note two things the text says are present: Number 1) the Spirit of God and Number 2) the Word of God. God speaks, “Let there be light” and it comes into being by the power of His Spirit. God creates *by His Word*¹ *through* His Spirit. The Spirit brings about the Father’s will in creation – bringing order out of chaos, creating what is, out of that which was not (Gen. 1:2, Heb. 11:3). In other words, the work of the Spirit in creation is to extend God’s presence into creation in such a way as to *order and complete what has been planned in the mind of God*².

Isn’t that incredible?! The Holy Spirit is one of God the Father’s agents to bring about what He’s thought of.

¹ Col 1:16

² See Ferguson in *The Holy Spirit*, pg. 21

And this same Holy Spirit shows up throughout the OT in similar fashion. The divine presence that guided God's people in the Exodus out of Egypt – a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night (Ex. 13:21-22) – was the Holy Spirit (Isa. 63:10-14). It's the Spirit of God that gifts certain men in the construction of the Tabernacle or in inspiring the OT prophets with the word of God (e.g. 2 Sam 23:2).

Brothers and sisters, the Old Testament is filled with references to the Spirit's work, but on the whole, the Spirit's activity in the OT was “enigmatic, sporadic, selective, and external.” The prophets longed for better days. We see this poignantly in Moses' words from **Num 11.29 on your hand out, “I wish that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!”** Moses longed for a day when all God's people would possess God's Spirit.

Does this mean that the OT believers didn't possess the Spirit? *What do you think?* Did OT believers possess God's Spirit?

The OT never speaks of the Holy Spirit *indwelling* believers. “Dwelling” language is the language of covenant, the language of God's presence. It's relational, and takes us back to the Garden of Eden. But in the OT God's dwelling is always *external*, in the tabernacle and the temple, never *in* believers³.

In the OT, the Spirit empowers believers, but not equally, and not indefinitely – [and we saw this in Brad's sermon a couple of weeks ago on 1 Samuel when he talked about the Spirit's work in Saul's life]. And another testimony to the Holy Spirit's selective work is David's prayer in Ps 51; he prays that God wouldn't take the Holy Spirit from him.

In the OT, the Spirit's work was predominantly reserved for leaders – prophets, priests and kings. But there is the *hope* that what Moses wanted – remember that's for all people to possess God's Spirit – would come to pass. Does anyone know where we see that in the OT?

Ezek. 36:25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. **26** I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. **27** And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

³ See *God's Indwelling Presence* by James Hamilton Jr., pg. 25

Joel 2:28 “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. **29** Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. **30** I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. **31** The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. **32** And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the survivors whom the LORD calls.

Jer. 31:33 “This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. **34** No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.⁴”

We see the beginning of the fulfillment of these promises in the person of Jesus Christ. Any comments or questions here? OK, moving on to Point IV...

IV. THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE PERSON OF CHRIST, LEFT HAND SIDE IN THE INSIDE OF YOUR HAND OUT

When we turn to the NT, our understanding of the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit comes into greater focus and clarity. To begin, let’s look at the work of the Spirit in the Person of Christ.

We can trace Holy Spirit at work in Christ through three stages.

Number 1: Conception

In Luke’s gospel, the angel speaking to Mary says, “**The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God**” (Lk. 1:35).

That word “overshadow” is used in the Greek translation of the OT (LXX) to refer to the cloud of God’s glory that would hover about the tabernacle. Luke is saying the promised New Temple of the OT is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the promised glory of the Father, dwelling with his people.

⁴ Jer. 31 doesn’t use the word “Spirit,” but the hope of God’s people truly knowing and obeying the Lord is the same as the hope Ezk. 36.

⁵. *Move directly to “the second stage...”*

2. *Baptismal Anointing*

The second stage of the Spirit’s work in Christ starts with his baptism. The heavens open and prepares us for new revelation as a dove descends and God speaks, “this is my son, whom I love, with him I am well-pleased.⁶” And then, “full of the Spirit,” we read that Jesus is led through a re-run of Eden: right, Satan tempts Jesus like he did Adam. But unlike Israel who grieved the Spirit in the desert wanderings, the second Adam — that’s Jesus — he succeeds! Jesus – full of the Spirit – walks into enemy territory in the wilderness to face off with Satan and be tempted for 40 days and nights. He fights for His people, *and wins*. After defeating Satan, he demands, “Be gone, Satan!” (Matt. 4:10), and the devil flees. No wonder Jesus would strike fear into the demons during his ministry!

Even the early days of Jesus’ ministry remind us that in Christ, the Christian fights from a position of victory; and we only fight this fight by the power of God’s Spirit in us. Let’s move on to the next work of the Spirit in Christ; flip over to the right side on the inside of your hand out.

3. *Resurrection & Ascension*

The third stage of the Spirit’s work in Christ began with Jesus’ resurrection and ascension. Though often attributed to the Father, and the Son, the resurrection and ascension is also a work of the Holy Spirit. **Rom 1:4 says about, Jesus “who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead.”** And **1 Peter 3:18 says, “For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.”**

The NT teaches that through his life and ministry Jesus came into such complete possession of the Spirit, experiencing him without limit (Jn. 3.34), that he becomes “Lord of the Spirit.” (2 Cor 3.18). To summarize, the Bible teaches us that so much of what Jesus did was because of the Spirit’s work in him; his conception, his anointing, his resurrection & ascension, these were done in the power of the Spirit in Jesus.

⁵ Just as God cared for his ‘son’ (Ex. 4:22) in calling Israel out of Egypt (Dt. 8:1ff, Ezk. 16:1ff), so God continues in the care of the Spirit for the Son incarnate (also called out of Egypt – Mt. 2:15).

⁶ Matt. 3:17

Comments, questions? [So the Holy Spirit helps Jesus in his work. Are there any examples from modern day life that serve as a picture for what the Spirit does? Marriage] OK, point five:

V. THE HOLY SPIRIT AT WORK IN THE CHRISTIAN

Jesus' parting words prepared his people for the promised Holy Spirit. In **Luke 24:49** he says, **“And look, I am sending you what my Father promised. As for you, stay in the city until you are empowered from on high.”** Where is that promised fulfilled? *Pentecost*. Let's look at point one, the gift of the Spirit.

1. The Gift of the Spirit

Acts 2.1-4..., you can turn there, **“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were *filled with the Holy Spirit* and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”**

Then Peter preaches, explaining what has happened quoting Joel 2 that we read earlier. Then he quotes Psalm 110, and we read in **Acts 2:33 – this is in your handout – “Exalted to the right hand of God, [Jesus] has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.”**

Notice two things. First, we see how the gift of the Spirit represented by violent winds and flames of fire, isn't some peculiar twist in God's plan. Rather, it's *the central* element in the New Covenant promise that God had given to his people back in Joel chapter 2 or Ezekiel 36; we looked at those passages earlier.

And secondly, in quoting Psalm 110, Peter shows how the gift of the Spirit *to* Christ and then the bestowal of the Spirit *by* Christ fulfills Father's promise to the Son in Psalm 2.8. In that Psalm it says, “Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance.” Well in Pentecost we see the nations coming to Christ; the great commission is being fulfilled and being fulfilled primarily by the work of the Spirit.

Also at Pentecost we have the reversal of Babel. Remember that story? In Genesis 10, we're given a list of nations, followed by God confusing their language and

scattering them. Here in Acts 2.8-12 we're given another list of nations, except this time their languages are understood as they're gathered together in Jerusalem. The effects of sin are being reversed in a new community of both Jew and Gentile, united by...the Holy Spirit!

Brothers and sisters, as I was studying this I was amazed at the connections of the Holy Spirit from the OT to the NT. After all: fire, wind, and a divine tongue reminds us of what Moses encountered at Mt. Sinai. There Moses ascended, only to descend with the Ten Commandments, the Law of God. In the same way in the New Testament, Christ had just ascended, and at Pentecost he comes down, not with the law written on tablets of clay, but with the gift of his own Spirit to write the law in the believer's heart. This enables us to fulfill the law's commands. Here is the fulfillment of Jeremiah 31 and the great hope of Moses that we looked at in Numbers 11.

Whereas in the Old Covenant the Spirit's work was generally limited to a few, mostly, men and leaders, now we read in Acts 2:17 that sons and daughters prophesy, young men have visions, old men have dreams. These visions and dreams were modes of communicating the knowledge of God under the Old Covenant. But in Christ and by the gift of the Spirit, *all* the Lord's people possess the knowledge of God. Jer. 31:34 looks forward to this point, it says: **"No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother saying 'know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest."**

[SLOW] So you might say, "Isaac – that's a lot." Here's what I want you to see, Pentecost is the culmination of Jesus' work! Remember what Jesus said in **John 7:37**, which says, **"On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."** ³⁹ **By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified."**

The coming of the Spirit is evidence of Christ's glorification, his heavenly enthronement. Thus, the book of Acts is not so much about the acts of the Holy Spirit through the apostles, but the continuing acts of Jesus Christ through the Spirit.

Comments, questions?

So what benefits does the indwelling of the Spirit bring to the believer? Well we only have time to look at one more, but it's a glorious one because we're going to talk about regeneration.

2. Regeneration

Just as it's the Spirit's role to give physical life and breath to all of creation, so it's his role to give spiritual life to men. Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be "born again" by the Spirit (John 3:6-7). He also tells his disciples that "the Spirit gives life" (John 6:63).

For that heart of stone to become a heart of flesh (Ez 36), God must do a supernatural work through the Spirit. Spiritually speaking, the world is not as it seems. It appears alive, yet in reality we're surrounded by spiritual corpses. We walk every day among the dead. Our prayer and hope is that God, through his Spirit, would make them alive.

The Spirit's work of rebirth in the Christian's life has several aspects to it.

First, it involves an *intellectual* enlightening. John writes in **1 John 2:20** "**But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge.**" This anointing of the Holy Spirit is shared by every Christian and is said to lead to a certain knowledge – the knowledge of who God is and what He's promised. That doesn't mean the Christian knows everything; any more than a blind man who receives sight is able to see everything simultaneously. But the truth that once went unrecognized is now known and celebrated by the one who is regenerate, or the one who is "born again".

Second, the Spirit's work of regeneration involves *liberation of the will*. Before, our wills – our desires – were in bondage to sin and incapable of following Jesus – much the way a dead man is unresponsive (Eph. 2:1).

Third, the Spirit's work of regeneration involves *cleansing and renewal*. So when Jesus tells Nicodemus that "unless one is born of *water* and of Spirit," he is alluding to the new covenant promise of Ezekiel 36, "I will sprinkle clean water on you, *and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness...* and I will give you a new heart." (1 Cor. 6:11 clearly speaks to this as well)

So complete is the Spirit's work of renewal in regeneration that Paul writes, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a *new creation*. The old has passed away;

behold, the new has come” (2 Cor. 5:17). Praise God for His glorious work in our life!

Friends we have much more to cover on the Holy Spirit’s work in the life of the believer: Conviction, Union with Christ, Fruit of the Spirit, the Spirit’s praying on our behalf, and assurance...but we’ve covered all we can for today.

Any final Questions or Comments?

PRAY

Put Hoekema on front
Put emails on back