

Call to Obedience #256
PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA
www.schultze.org

“He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the spirit, which they that believed on him should receive...)” (John 7:38–39)

The Work of the Holy Spirit

By Reimar Schultze

In some religious circles, the Holy Spirit is hardly ever mentioned, which gives one the impression that the Bible has little to say about the Holy Spirit. On the other end of the spectrum, there are congregations where a special baptism with the Holy Spirit takes center stage. It is obvious, then, that many believers are confused about the doctrine and work of the Holy Spirit. But it should not take very long for any sincere Bible reader to discover that the Bible is pregnant with teachings on the Holy Spirit. We see the Holy Spirit in the first chapter of the Bible as creator, and we see him in the last book of the Bible as a revealer of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, I shall present to you a few simple truths on the Holy Spirit.

1. The Holy Spirit Is a Creator.

As the Holy Spirit was co-partner in the creation of the universe, so he also was in the creation of the church, and so he also is in the creation or the making of a new man out of the old, making him godly.

2. The Holy Spirit Is a Convicter, Revealer, and Teacher.

The Holy Spirit will convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment (John 16:8). Without the Holy Spirit, we do not know what sin is. With the Holy Spirit, we are able to see more clearly our own sinfulness in contrast to his holiness. It will bring us to our knees in surrender and deep humility.

The Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth (v. 13). Hence, without the Holy Spirit, we do not know truth from error. Without the Holy Spirit, we cannot know the Godhead. For this reason, Charles Wesley wrote in one of his hymns: “Spirit of faith come down, Reveal the things of God; And make to us the Godhead known...”

Without the Holy Spirit, we cannot be taught, and we do not know how to walk with God and how to bring this world to Christ (v. 26).

3. The Holy Spirit’s Indwelling Is the Evidence That We Are Christians.

Jesus said before Pentecost, “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:16–18).

One of the things that distinguishes true Christians from all other people in the world is that they have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them. Jesus said that the world cannot receive the Holy Spirit, and that means also that if we have the world within us, we do not have the Holy Spirit, or we have crowded him out since we received him.

Before Pentecost, the apostles had the Holy Spirit dwelling with them, but after Pentecost, he was dwelling in them. Again, the distinguishing mark of a Christian is that he has the Holy

Spirit within him, and “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Rom. 8:16).

4. The Holy Spirit Comes to Us When We Are Born of God.

Jesus said to Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader, “Ye must be born again” (John 3:7). There is a must here—not a could or should but a must. Without our being born of the Spirit, we cannot enter the kingdom of God, which is “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,” as Paul puts it in Romans 14:17. Jesus said, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6).

The Holy Spirit comes into us at the rebirth in the same way that a mother’s and father’s chromosomes come into the child at conception. It is at that moment that the nature of the father and mother begin to become embedded in every cell of that child. In a similar way, it is by virtue of this spiritual rebirth that we receive the very life of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and that we become children of God. Without the Holy Spirit, it is impossible to live the Christian life. And since we are born of the Holy Spirit, he imparts into us a knowledge of the Holy and of that which is holy. This immediately causes us to recognize and shun sin. Hence, John says, “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God” (1 John 3:9). When our minds become insensitive to sin, and we cease to shun it, it is evidence that the life of the Holy Spirit has departed from us.

5. The Holy Spirit Is a Sanctifier.

After conversion, we must be cleansed of the carnal nature, which bites and kicks and complains and criticizes and refuses to pray, witness, and obey. This cleansing of the carnal nature is called “entire sanctification,” and it is what Paul had in mind when he prayed, “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it” (1 Thess. 5:23–24).

This work of sanctification is only possible through the power of the Holy Spirit working within us. It is only by this power that the Self-life can be subdued and crucified, for the Self will never take one step after Jesus.

6. The Holy Spirit Gives Power To Witness.

Ask Jesus about another great purpose of the Holy Spirit, and this is what he will tell you: “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

At the first out-pouring of the Holy Spirit, men who had previously locked themselves into the upper room for fear of the Jews now confronted the Jews from all nations with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Then a new wave of fearful converts, who were the products of the previous out-pouring of the Spirit, became emboldened by the second out-pouring: “And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:31).

There is such a thing as witnessing in the power of the Holy Spirit, and there is witnessing without the Holy Spirit. There is witnessing with timidity, and there is witnessing with boldness. We need the fulness of the Spirit to witness, to fulfill the Great Commission—all of us!

7. Is There a Need For a Baptism with the Holy Spirit?

John said that Jesus would baptize his believers with the Holy Ghost and with fire (Matt. 3:11). There are several instances of such baptisms in the book of Acts. Since then, many Christians have had similar baptisms with the Holy Spirit. Here is how evangelist Charles

Finney (1792-1876) relates his experience. He was converted in the morning and filled with the Holy Spirit in the afternoon. He said, "Suddenly, the Holy Spirit came upon me and flooded me completely and thoroughly...It appeared to me as if I was standing under the influence of an electrical current which was going through and through me. Waves of love upon waves of love were pouring over me...Uninhibited, it came upon me until I cried out, 'If this continues, I shall die. Stop it, Lord!'"

The consequence of Finney's experience is that he immediately became one of the greatest soul-winners of all time. The power of the Holy Spirit was so strong upon him that many times people just fell on their knees to be saved by just some simple words he had spoken. But Finney also confessed that frequently the power to witness waned, and he had to ask the Lord for a new infilling with the Holy Spirit.

What is so very important for us to realize is that as wonderful as such experiences were and are, we must never make a doctrine out of people's personal experiences. This will only lead to confusion, to disillusionment, to counterfeit experiences, to frustration, and to division. Paul never mentioned the "Acts experiences,"—not even his own—in his epistles other than that he admonished Christians by saying, "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but ever be filled and stimulated with the [Holy] Spirit" (Eph. 5:18 AMP). Peter, James, and John also, in their writings, do not bring out their glorious baptism of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, lest others would attempt to model their own experiences after them. What they do, rather, is stress an intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus—which is the fruit of a Spirit-filled life (Gal. 5:22–23). Holy Ghost experiences are not for show. Rather, they bring us to deep humility and entire, unconditional surrender to all God has for us.

Again, our doctrine must not be built on others' experiences but on our need to be filled and refilled with the Spirit. And if we are not filled with the Spirit, we must examine our hearts for traces of neglect, disobedience, and worldliness. These things grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30), and if we persist in them, they put out the fire of the Holy Spirit altogether (1 Thess. 5:19).

Jesus said, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). If you do that, you will be emptied of yourself, and the Spirit of God will fill you as much and as quickly as he can.

There are many other works of the Holy Spirit, but space will not allow elaboration. Such other doctrines worth mentioning are that the Holy Spirit is the administrator of gifts for ministry (1 Cor. 12:7ff), and that he wants to lead us to be at the right place at the right time with the right message always (Rom. 8:14).

Perhaps, the decisive question is not so much "Do I have the Holy Spirit?," but "Does the Holy Spirit have me?" If so, I have power to witness for Jesus and to live godly in a crooked and perverse generation.