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God, The Spirit in Mission

The Spirit Who Releases a People

1. **The "Hidden" partner** – Too often the forgotten member of the Trinity, but the Holy Spirit gives us the power to love, to live and to witness. All three characteristics point to the way He seeks to draw attention away from Himself. This life – giving, loving and witnessing Spirit is always pointing in other directions. His role can therefore be missed. Henry Boer says, "He is a reticent Spirit."

John continually refers to the Holy Spirit by using a masculine pronoun (*ekeinos*=he) to accompany a neuter noun (*pneuma*= spirit). This may seem like bad grammar, but it is certainly superb theology! He does this in order to emphasize that the Holy Spirit is a "He," not an "it." (See John 14:26; 15:26; 16:8-14.)

- He does not bear witness to himself, but to Jesus (John 15:26)
- He is sent by the Father, in the name of Christ (John 14:26)
- He says only what he hears, and recalls the words of Jesus
- He will only glorify Christ (John 16:13-15)
- He makes men his fruit bearers are the witnesses (Acts 1:8), the relationship is so organic that his works come over as theirs (Galatians 5:22, 23). Truly the hallmark of an 'anonymous' partner.

Without Him we would have only our own resources.

In reality He has been called, "the author of every positive revolution in the history of the church," "Satan's unsolved problem," or "God's secret weapon, bringing explosive life to His people."

Holy - God cannot deny His own character, therefore, in the same way that God is completely pure and totally unblemished, so is the "Holy" Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19).

Eternal – If God were limited by time and space, then He could not be God. The Creator cannot be limited by His creation, nor could God die or face extinction.

Living – There was never a moment when the Holy Spirit was not there and there will never be a funeral service for Him, for He will always be there for us.

God – If He is to be perfect and holy in His character, then He must be more than human. But to last beyond the vast eons of time and be eternal, He has to be divine. So when Scripture says that the Holy Spirit is eternal (always was and always will be), then it is actually affirming that He must be God (Heb. 9:14)

2. The “Enabling partner”: It is a simple fact that without the Spirit

1. There would be **no witness** - The disciples were told not even to attempt to do anything until they had received power from the Holy Spirit. “But when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be filled with power, and you will be witnesses for me in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

2. There would be **no understanding** – without the Spirit we cannot learn all that God longs to teach us. The Holy Spirit wants to share with us all that we need to know. He is uniquely qualified to do this because “only God’s Spirit knows all about God” (1 Corinthians 2:11).

3. There would be **no worship** - without the Spirit our worship would be little more than mere routine expression to God. As Jesus taught the woman at a Samaritan well, “God is Spirit, and only by the power of his Spirit can people worship him as he really is” (John 4:24).

4. There would be **no gifts** - without the Spirit we cannot receive from the Lord all that he wants to give to us in order that we might be properly equipped for his service. “Whoever does not have the Spirit cannot receive the gifts that come from God’s Spirit” (1 Corinthians 2:14).

5. There would be **no power** - challenged by God to live his life yet without being given the power to do so, all our Christian lives would amount to no more than the sum total of our maximum human exertion and efforts. “For the Spirit that God has given us does not make us timid; instead, his Spirit fills us with power, love and self-control” (2 Timothy 1:7).

6. There would be **no guidance** - devoid of a real revelation of all that God has.

7. There would be **no security** - the Holy Spirit is God’s guarantee to us that God can take care of us now and in the future. “Because of the Spirit that God has given us we know that God lives in union with us” (1 John 3:24). Time and again the Holy Spirit is referred to as the Spirit of truth who fulfils God’s promises to his people.

8. There would be **no evidence** - without the Spirit we would have no signs and wonders as a vivid demonstration of God’s reality and power. These

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are never the special province of 'miracle workers'. We read that "Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit. . . a man richly blessed by God and full of power, performed great miracles and wonders among the people" (Acts 6:6, 8)

9. There would be **no life** - the Spirit brings a quality of lifestyle which is unparalleled! "To be controlled by the Spirit results in life and peace" (Romans 8:6).

10. There would be **no future** - we have something to look forward to because we know that God "has given us the Holy Spirit in our hearts as the guarantee of all that he has in store for us" (2 Corinthians 1:22).

11. There would be **no uniqueness** - there are so many religions and faiths which claim to bring information about God and man; past and future. For Christians the Holy Spirit makes the difference. Instead of just talking about God - out there - we know him living within us! What is more he is the Holy Spirit. The Greek word for 'holy' contains the meaning of being 'different.'

12. There would be **no obedience** - As we live in obedience to his direction we discover, not an easy route, but a God who never leaves us! "Now, in obedience to the Holy Spirit, I am going . . . the Holy Spirit has warned me that prison and troubles wait for me. But I reckon my own life to be worth nothing to me; I only want to complete my mission and finish the work that the Lord Jesus gave me to do" (Acts 20:22-24).

13. There would be **no resurrection** - without the Holy Spirit Jesus would still be dead! Christianity would not even exist. The Holy Spirit is no optional extra but one of an undivided Trinity. Without the Spirit Jesus would still be dead, and so would we! "If the Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from death, lives in you, then he who raised Christ from death will also give life to your mortal bodies by the presence of his Spirit in you" (Romans 8:11).

3. **The "Empowering" partner** – who took one hundred and twenty cowering, frightened people and transformed them. This power changes people, as A. W. Tozer observed, "the church began in power, moved in power, and moved just as long as she had power. When she no longer had power, she dug in for safety and sought to conserve her gains."

As the Doctor put it, "Got it all, well, where is it?"

The gift of God in John 14, part of the last will and testament of King Jesus.

- He feels (Eph 4:30)
- He knows (John 14:26)
- He does (John 16:8-11)

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He is at work in us through works, words and wonder, to empower us in order that His light might shine through our lives to a darkened world.

For as long as we are called upon to act as the agents of Jesus upon earth and prepare for His return, we have a job to do. This is one reason that the Holy Spirit has been given to us to act as our helper. Because of the aid and intervention of the Holy Spirit, the good news about Jesus would be taken to the whole world. Over the centuries of human history many would be brought to Jesus and would step out of darkness into the glorious sunshine of living in the light of the love of God (John 14:17-26; 16:13).

He brings gifts, and these include missionary (Eph 3:7), and fruit and gifts are never seen as alternatives but co-essentials. The effective exercise of spiritual gifts depends upon the fruit of the Spirit. So the Holy Spirit does not just give His people gifts; He also wants to produce fruit in our lives. One without the other is just not part of God's plan for our lives! The Corinthian church tried to use one without the other like a car tire without air – the ingredients are all there, but they are worthless."

As D. L. Moody observed, "When the Spirit came to Moses, the plagues came upon Egypt, and he had power to destroy men's lives. When the Spirit came upon Elijah, fire came down from heaven. When the Spirit came upon Joshua, he moved around the city of Jericho, and the whole city fell into his hands. But when the Spirit came upon the Son of Man, He gave His life, He healed the broken-hearted."

The Holy Spirit may well live "within" us, but He still comes "upon" us to anoint our lives for particular acts of service.

Luke 4:18-19

We are anointed:

- To live a new life
- For suffering
- For blessing
- To heal

Nowhere is this more true than in the field of missions and evangelism. The Holy Spirit is the supreme evangelist given to guide people toward the truth (John 14:17, 16:3, 1John 4:6).

By this Spirit, people are convicted of sin. He is the author of new life and the One who brings us into the reality of being born into a new life in Jesus (John 16:7-8, 6:63, 3:6-8; 2 Cor. 3:6; 1 Pet. 3:18). He gives us the assurance of knowing that our salvation has been accomplished through crucified love and that it is secure (Rom. 8:16; Gal. 4:6; 1 John 3:2, 4:13, 5:6).

Problems and blockages are all ours. They include:

- Our reluctance to share our faith
- Our failure to pray
- Our lack of love and compassion for those around us
- Our isolation from our community
- Our cowardice when we could have spoken

4. The “Victorious” partner – Satan is our “accuser” but,

- a. He is a defeated opponent.
- b. He is limited in time and space.
- c. He vents bitterness and anger against God’s people.
- d. He is at a singular disadvantage – he is in the wrong league.

Defeating the powers. Words that the Bible employs about them include names like “principalities.” These clearly refer to superhuman powers (Rom 8:38; Eph 6:12; Col 1:16; 2:15).

Where are these powers? The Bible declares that they are all around us. It refers to angels of light (Ps. 91:11; Matt. 4:6; Heb. 1:4-7) and to that myriad of angels that chose to follow Satan in his rebellion against God and form the nucleus of his demon forces (Matt. 12:22-29; Luke 8:30-38; Rev. 16:13-14).

These demons may attach themselves to specific territories or practices (Daniel 10:13; 12:1 ff). They appear to be equally at home in “the pit” (Luke 8:31; Rev. 1:9-11), which is probably where we would expect to find them in “the air” (Eph. 2:2).

One woman recently admitted that she use to be a practicing witch. She said she would always know when she saw a Christian because they would have a “glow” about them. Yet on a cross the battle was permanently won!

An enemy has done this...Satan has opposed the doctrine of the Spirit-filled life about as bitterly as any other doctrine there is. He has confused it, opposed it, and surrounded it with false notions and fears. He has blocked every effort of the church of Christ to receive from the Father her divine and blood-bought patrimony. The church has tragically neglected this great liberating truth—that there is now for the child of God a full and wonderful and completely satisfying anointing with the Holy Ghost.

– A. W. Tozer

Healing is also a great illustration.

Healing was an expression of the mind and will of God for humankind.
(Mark 1:40-41, GNT)

5. The “Directing” partner - Jesus gave no command to witness to the Gentiles, but in Acts 4:36 a Levite endorses what Harry Boer calls, “an uncommanded, undirected spontaneous witness to the faith on the part of lay-Christians. While Babel’s confusion of tongues created a particularity, Pentecost produced a worldwide movement where both Church and missions are creations of the Holy Spirit, essential elements in God’s short-term plan. For the Church is an interim period was to be missions. In this sense the Holy Spirit is truly a missionary spirit.

God never want us to miss His way for us.

Paul and his companions discovered this when they wanted to go to Bithynia against the will of God, because “the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to” (Acts 16:7). Jesus doesn’t promise that the Holy Spirit will *control* us. He doesn’t promise that He will *drive* us. He doesn’t say that the Holy Spirit will *force* us to do anything. He says He will *guide* us. - Charles Stanley, *The Wonderful Spirit-Filled Life*.

So often this direction will come to us in the desert. We go from there to turn the world upside down (Acts 17:6), and to resemble Jesus (2 Cors 3:17-18).

When the Holy Spirit took charge, He immediately then produced three distinctive characteristics to:

- Promote compassionate actions (Acts 6:1-3)
- Demonstrate spiritual power (Acts 6:8)
- Generate bold proclamation (Acts 7:52)

We go there to live as His Church. If you do not join in with what the Church is doing, you have no share in this Spirit...For where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church and every kind of grace. – Ireneaus, *Against Heresies*

It is the task of the Holy Spirit to make the invisible church visible to the watching world. It an enormous group of people is going to be drawn together out of every “kindred, tribe, and nation” and into one great family. So we are called to a community, not just to a local fellowship, to be part of the global people of God. We are not only called, but we are also reborn into a family that extends worldwide and will never end.

The phrase “the church” used in Acts 8:1 is crucial, the Spirit is at work in the church of Jesus – and He knows no boundaries. One could almost imagine Paul raising his index finger as he admonished the church in Thessalonica, “Do not put out the Spirit’s fire” (1 Thess. 5:19). We need to heed that same warning for today and let it burn!