

WORKING WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

Marshall Stiver, June 5, 2022

We know that Pentecost pictures God's first early harvest of humanity and it takes place at Christ's return, which we obviously associate with the first resurrection. It's a time that we eagerly await because of all the faithful that are going to come up and be raised at that time. They'll come out of their graves to immortality.

All the histories, all the studying that we've done on our own, the things we've heard at services, the histories of these people, of the faithful and perhaps some of these we've patterned our own lives after in various positive ways, they will be raised on that very day. And the faithful who are still alive at that time, of which we could be some of those, they will be changed from mortal to immortal in the twinkling of an eye. Death will be swallowed up in victory. It's going to be a wonderful time for those who've waited and have overcome to the end of their lives.

All these are those who have been redeemed through Christ's blood and who received the firstfruits of the Holy Spirit. It's through the gift of the Holy Spirit that all these individuals overcame this world, just as Christ set the example for us all. He overcame the world as well.

The Holy Spirit was poured out on the Church on the Feast of Pentecost in AD 31. Our spiritual victory hinges on receiving and using God's Spirit in our lives. It is the power to life! We know that Christ's sacrifice is what makes all of this possible.

Acts 5:30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree.

31 Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

32 And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit [which] God has given to those who obey Him."

We understand full well that encompassed in that word "obey" is faith toward Christ, repentance and baptism. At baptism, a believer's full intention, our full intention as we reflect back on it, is to obey God and His law throughout our lifetime. Now, the need for Christ's sacrifice is because of sin, as we well understand, which takes us back then to the beginning in the Garden of Eden. Paul refers to that:

Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—

That's how sin entered, through Adam and Eve. But ever since then we've all followed suit, we've all done the very same thing. We've each earned the penalty of sin, which is death. You could say we got off to a bad start. That would be an understatement. We got off to a really bad start. Let's go to Ephesians chapter 2. Here we see the second Adam radically changed our course, the course of events, and our future. Paul writes:

Ephesians 2:1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,

Through Christ's sacrifice and the steps of conversion following that we've already discussed, He paid our penalty in our stead for our sins.

2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,

3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

We were, at one time, very different than we are today, hopefully extremely different, and different than the world in general. We, at one time, followed our own lusts. We followed the desires of our hearts, whatever they might be. Generally, it was in a selfish direction, fulfilling our own will. That's what we were intent on doing.

Is this old news or is this vital news for us every day? Well, we can say that it's extremely vital especially because of verse 2, where it says again:

2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,

We can't see spirit, but we know without question that there is a spirit world around us. We have no doubt of that. Who do we suppose drives the anger and the insanity to see the horrible things that are unfolding in our own country? Just recently we had this mass school shooting. Many, many children and some adults killed. Horrible, horrible thing. That's what we see happening. Much of what we see is animal behavior, only animals behave better than much of what we see in the news every day. If you really think about it, it's totally true.

From Revelation 12:9 we know that Satan deceives the whole world. The whole world is under his sway. They're blinded. The veil has been cast over their eyes. But how does he do it? The Apostle Paul tells us here that he does it through his spirit, which works in the sons of disobedience. We know that his spirit is in the air. He's the

prince of the power of the air. We can't see it, but we don't doubt for a second that it is there. Adam and Eve were both overcome by that invisible element that they allowed to work in their minds. They yielded themselves to it rather than to God and to His way of life. They rejected God's authority and therefore, His Spirit. Because of that God said:

Genesis 3:22 ... "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever" —

23 therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken.

So, because they had yielded themselves to the wrong spirit, God cut them off from the tree of life which is a type of the Holy Spirit. Obedience to God's authority and His laws is a prerequisite to having access to the Holy Spirit. That, of course, is why we repented when we were first called, and we repent continuously throughout our lives because it is a prerequisite. It's something we must have if we're going to have the Holy Spirit.

Revelation 22:14 Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.

This is the state of those who yield themselves to the Holy Spirit. They yield to God, obviously, because it is His Spirit. They who are obedient in the letter and in the spirit of the law have a right to God's Spirit. In other words, they're overcomers. They're people who continuously change.

15 But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.

Those who choose self-will and therefore yield themselves to Satan's spirit, many unwittingly and some unfortunately wittingly, they will not enter into the heavenly city to come. This verse that we read here in verse 14 is a companion verse to what we read in Acts 5:32, which we've already covered.

But I want to take just a minute to cover the bases to be thorough here. We don't want to misunderstand what the verse means. Does obeying God and doing His commandments mean that we never sin? Of course, we know the answer to that. We know we're not yet perfect.

Obeying God means that we are just as committed as we were on the day of our baptism to living our life just like Jesus Christ did – without sin. That's what we committed to. That's what we strive for and that's what it means to obey God. Let's go to 1 John chapter 1, we'll follow up on this before we move along. Look at verses 8 and 9 and, of course, here John explains it. He explains that we still do sin, obviously. He says:

1 John 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

A very sure sign of the Holy Spirit working in us is that we don't hide from the truth about ourselves. We quickly acknowledge our sin when we're made aware of it. Sometimes we know it instantly and sometimes we learn it because we weren't aware. But we acknowledge our sin to God with genuine sorrow and with commitment to get right back on track with the same attitude we had from the beginning at baptism. And then God will forgive us, He'll cleanse us, He'll clean us up internally.

As I said, it's good to be thorough as we reflect on these things and this is the day that we reflect on some of those things. But the point of covering what we have thus far is to illustrate the fact that the unseen spirit world is as real as anything can be in our living environment. As real as the chair here, the microphone in front of me or on me whichever the case may be. It's that real. And the thing is, the Spirit is powerful.

On the one hand, the whole world has been deceived through Satan's spirit. That's power! Then, on the other hand, if we go back to Genesis 1 (which we won't do at this point) we know that God's Spirit was hovering over the face of the deep and when the Word (Christ) commanded, the Spirit created the things that He commanded. The entire earth was made. It was beautified with all the environmental things that are here and intact today. The entire heavens were created in this very same way.

We can only try to imagine, and it's good that we do, we can try feebly to imagine such power in invisible form. But what is so special and so very humbling is to realize that our Father and Christ want to use that limitless power to transform our minds, and therefore our character, to reflect them so that we can become just like them, loving beings that are incorruptible. That's why God's plan of salvation was put in motion in the first place.

So, for this message I would like to focus on God's Spirit, what it can help us to do and how we can stir it up. The Apostle Paul is writing to Timothy very fondly. He says:

2 Timothy 1:5 when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.

Very positive, very wonderful statements here. This is a beautiful family relationship that we can picture in our minds; a generational relationship, three generations in Timothy's household.

There is first of all unfeigned faith. We know what unfeigned faith is. It's real, it's living. It's not fickle faith, here today and gone tomorrow. No, it's steadfast. There is

steadfast faith. There is evidence also of diligent parenting because of the fact that we see three generations here. Fortunately, Timothy made the good choice to carry it on.

Timothy stands out to become the progenitor of this same faith to his future offspring. It's a very beautiful picture. And through that faith the Holy Spirit has been actively involved in this family. It's a family that's had access to the power of the universe. It's an awesome thing. Paul writes:

6 Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

What we need to think about, we can read these words and they don't really jump out at us. We can't hear the inflection that Paul was thinking, if we want to think of it that way. Imagine what was going through his mind as he was writing these words. Was he thinking to himself, "Oh yeah, and by the way, don't forget about the Holy Spirit. You have it." No. He wasn't casually reminding this young man. He is zealously reminding him to stir up the Holy Spirit, because otherwise Timothy would be on his own. How scary would that be in the position that God was putting him into, to take care of God's people?

It's very obvious that Paul cared for Timothy almost like a father to a son. It's the same way, with that same loving attitude that we should remind each other of this gift. And we should remind each other often, because it's easy to forget when we get wound up in our day, our day to day lives. We can forget it. It seems crazy, but we can. The obvious reason for stirring it up is because of what it is. It is God's power that He delivers to us! This is what Christ tells His disciples before Pentecost. He says:

Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

That word power comes from the Greek *dunamis*. It means force or, specifically, miraculous power.

We know that prior to Christ's death they had all been fearful and they abandoned Christ. We can reflect on the words that Paul had said, that God's Spirit is not a spirit of fear. They didn't have the Holy Spirit at that time. They were fearful and they left Christ. The Holy Spirit was given to them and then they had the courage to be utterly bold after they had received it and yielded to it. They were incredibly bold. They had the boldness to be different than those around them. Brethren, that's the same thing that we're going to need more and more of in the crucial days ahead of us as this time winds down. World conditions are going to increasingly intensify as we move forward.

Here's another aspect of power, and there are many. We'll look at a few.

Acts 2:5 And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven.

6 And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language.

7 Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans?"

The disciples were Galileans, that's a fact. The Galileans were basically regarded as the offscouring, the uneducated, the uncultured, or the ignorant. Here they were doing these amazing things. So, this is an example of what Christ had told them would happen when they received miraculous power through the Holy Spirit.

Something that impressed me in my youth, and I remember it from when I must have been in seventh or eighth grade at the time. It was a minister who came through and was speaking to us. I think he was giving us a Bible Study that night. He explained that regarding one's intellect, it increases with the addition of God's Holy Spirit. He said he had noticed it in himself when he had been baptized. And I've heard various ones say the very same thing through the years since I've been in the ministry. It might have been wisdom, it might have been understanding that dramatically increased from the point of one's baptism. It was always something that's needed. If there was a lacking, and an acknowledgement of the lacking, then God gives the Holy Spirit that helps us in that way. I've never forgotten that.

Boldness, which again relates to power, is another one of the things that the faithful always need. We need to be bold, just as the disciples were as the new converts. And especially as the faithful near life's end. We have a lot of elderly within the Church today. Some that are sick within the Church today.

Stephen, the deacon, died a martyr's death. He was a man, that scripture tells us, was full of faith and of the Holy Spirit. God gave him the power of encouragement just before he died. Miraculous power comes in many forms and in many circumstances. God takes care of His people through His Spirit. Let's go to Acts chapter 21. We'll look at another example of miraculous power. This one is regarding Paul. He was on one of his journeys and he's in the city of Tyre at this point.

Acts 21:4 And finding disciples, we stayed there seven days. They told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem.

5 When we had come to the end of those days, we departed and went on our way; and they all accompanied us, with wives and children, till we were out of the city. And we knelt down on the shore and prayed.

They were concerned. They were very concerned. The brethren knew, through the power of the Holy Spirit, that danger awaited Paul in Jerusalem and so that's why they warned him. The thing is, they were fully aware through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. They had no other source for knowing this.

The Holy Spirit can and does direct God's people to come to the same conclusions when they're yielded to that Spirit. We're looking at biblical examples, but we could talk about examples we see all the time. How often, at services, do we see messages meld together? The speakers had no idea what each other was going to talk about, no foreknowledge at all. It happens often.

How many times have conversations around the kitchen table in your home revolved around the topic of the sermon or sermonette that was going to be heard on the following Sabbath? How often do we find others of the brotherhood who have had some of the very same thoughts and ideas rolling through their head in the very same timeframe? You may not see somebody for a period, but you say, "You know, a while back I was thinking about thus and such." And they'll say, "You know, I was thinking about that, too." It happens often because God's Spirit moves His people when they're receptive to it. I think we find these things so encouraging because we know it's the result of that invisible power of God at work among us. It's incredibly encouraging.

As we live into more and more perilous times, brethren, do we realize how significant this miraculous communication could be or could become in our lives? I don't know. I'm just wondering. It could become something that we rely on, being able to communicate, being able to understand, perceive through the Spirit. It's something to think about, it's something to look forward to, to be ready for.

Regarding Paul, he did go on to Jerusalem. So, through the Spirit, the brethren were made aware of his danger, but the Holy Spirit did not forbid him from going. In Acts 16 we see a different story. The Holy Spirit did prohibit Paul and those with him from going into a couple of other cities that they wanted to go into.

Proverbs chapter 16 speaks to what we've just been talking about.

Proverbs 16:9 A man's heart plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps.

Those who yield themselves to the Holy Spirit know this is true. No, it doesn't happen every time. Sometimes our own will takes over and we plan something and then we just go through with it. It's dependent on how yielded we are to God, and therefore to His Spirit, at the time. We'll get into some more of that as we get farther into the message. But God does direct our steps. That's my point. He will direct our steps if we're tuned in to His Holy Spirit. Matthew 16:17 I think is an example that should be inspiring to the unbaptized, most certainly.

Matthew 16:17 Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

Peter was a disciple at this point. He was not an apostle. He had not yet received the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. He would still go on to deny Christ three times before Christ was sacrificed. But Peter was being led by the Spirit to come to right conclusions, which would have been dependent on his attitude at the time. He obviously had the correct attitude. He had the correct attitude because God let him understand who Christ was.

The same holds true for anyone approaching baptism today. God can work with your mind, and He'll lead and guide you through His Spirit to come to right conclusions. Then, at the point of baptism, of course, you receive the Holy Spirit. And it will be stronger in you. So, be encouraged.

Now, we got into this aspect of the Holy Spirit due to what we read there in 2 Timothy 1:7. From that same verse we know that it is also a spirit of love and of a sound mind. So, let's focus on the sound mind aspect a little bit right now. One of the things we know from John's writings is that the Holy Spirit is called the spirit of truth. And truth we would obviously associate with a sound mind. Someone who speaks the truth is sound-minded. We often hear that spoken. Paul says:

Ephesians 5:3 But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints;

4 neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

5 For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

We can hear this and we can know without question that it is sound-minded. That's sound-minded truth. We don't even doubt it. We understand it. But now Paul warns against getting weak-minded, so that someone might be able to deceive you. He's concerned just like we always are, concerned for each other.

6 Let no one deceive you with empty words...

Maybe about everything is grace. And we are saved by grace, but we have to prove our faith. We have to prove our faith with works. But he says:

6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

7 Therefore do not be partakers with them.

8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light

And so again, even though we were once in spiritual darkness we now walk as children of light and truth, and we get farther and farther away from the darkness.

9 (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth),

10 finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.

Christ is the Light of the world, and His Spirit is one of truth. So, the path we take in life is lit and His truth guides us to be able to prove what is acceptable and what isn't. It helps us to be able to discern between good and evil. That comes from a sound mind, being able to come to that point where we can deduce, we can come to understand what is right and what is wrong.

We're all familiar with the parable of the virgins. This fits right into this vein of thought. The foolish realized too late, just before the groom's return, that their lights were going out. They asked the wise to give them some of their oil, which we know is a type of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit leads us into all truth. In other words, it leads us to be sound-minded, if we are yielding ourselves to it. That's what wasn't happening with the five foolish virgins. Here's what a sound-minded person can do.

15 See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise,

That word circumspectly means to be very watchful, wary, cautious about what you hear. It means to be discerning of the true intentions of others who would like to draw us in and thereby corrupt us. We could make a sermon off of that one thought. We can reflect back on Adam and Eve in the Garden and how Eve was drawn in by smooth and deceptive words as she seemingly perceived no danger. From what we could read there, she didn't perceive anything dangerous.

The Holy Spirit can give us wisdom if we ask God for it so that we can be wise regarding our thoughts, our decisions and our perceptions.

16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

That's not a hard one to explain. It just means we make every moment valuable. It's precious because the day is evil and the time is short, and we understand that very well.

17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Through the sound-mindedness of the Holy Spirit, we can get a thorough understanding of what God's will for us is in the midst of the time we live. We live in moral chaos. We live in ethical chaos. Understanding, we need to realize, is far deeper than just an academic knowledge that something is wrong. We can say, "Well, yeah, it's wrong to steal." But we need to learn to hate what God hates and love what God

loves. That requires coming to understand His mind, to know what He knows. Not only that, but God can give us the will to apply what we come to understand.

The sound-minded search for understanding, and they seek the strength to follow through. We know that God, at His return, is expecting to come back to sound-minded servants. In other words, wise virgins, not foolish virgins.

Luke 12:42 And the Lord said, “Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season?”

43 Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.

He’s looking for someone who is redeeming the time, who is accomplishing seeking to do His will. He says:

44 Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has.

That’s the good end of a sound-minded servant, provided that they do, in fact, yield themselves to the Holy Spirit. Now, let’s look at the other side of the coin. Often that’s how it’s given to us.

47 And that servant who knew his master’s will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.

This one wasn’t redeeming the time. He wasn’t diligently seeking his master’s will. He knew it, but he wasn’t seeking to do it. There is no evidence to point to a sound mind because this one was not yielded. It’s yielded to self-interest. The light is going out or has already gone out.

Let’s turn our attention back to 2 Timothy chapter 1, verse 7, once more. The aspect of the Holy Spirit that we haven’t looked at so far is love. God has given us the spirit of power and of love. Of that phrase and of love *Gill’s Commentary* has this to say:

“To God, and Christ, and His church, and which is a fruit of the Holy Spirit; and such who have it seek not their own ease (or their own will) and credit, but the glory of God, the interest of Christ, and the good of souls; and having such a Spirit, and fired with such love, they are not easily intimidated by the adversary.”

I thought that was a very wonderful and encompassing aspect of this quality of the Holy Spirit. Let’s go to Colossians chapter 3. Here we’re going to see some of the things that we can do with the Holy Spirit, wonderful things, which is the Spirit of love and that’s the aspect we’re looking at here.

Colossians 3:12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;

13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.

These are wonderful qualities. All these qualities that we're to take on are of God. They're of His Spirit. We're to go beyond the letter in all of these things, to do them with deep affection. That's the point of it. With deep affection, which can only be genuine affection. So, we're to be merciful, kind, humble, forgiving from the heart. We're to be sensitive so as to be able to perceive if our genuineness is felt by others. All of these things play into it. All these aspects are born out of love, which is the greatest fruit of all. It's a product of a mind yielded to God's Holy Spirit of love. We are very, very fortunate. It's a miraculous thing to give this, but it's also a miraculous thing to sense it in others and to feel it reciprocated among brethren. It's miraculous. It's a wonderful thing. Let's go to John 15. Here Christ expands our potential capabilities. He says:

John 15:12 This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

To love as Jesus Christ loved is impossible without God's power in us. That means it is very possible for us to follow Christ's example. We lay our lives down by filling each other's needs. That's what Christ did for us. We had a great need for His sacrifice so we could be started out. We have needs that we can fill for each other as well. That, of course, requires a great deal of sensitivity, a great deal of contemplation and prayer to be able to come to see what God does. Does my brother or sister in Christ need a listening ear? Is that the deepest need they have right now? Friendship, encouragement, or exhortation. Is that their deepest need? Love requires a very outward focus which is totally contrary to the spirit of this world. But that's what we can do through this aspect of the Holy Spirit. We can do these things. Let's go to Hebrews chapter 10 now, verse 24. Very well-known scriptures that we need to think about and apply more and more as time goes by.

Hebrews 10:24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,

25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

By yielding to the Holy Spirit we'll put our heart into stirring up love and good works. When we're yielded that's what we'll do, because we're not going to be thinking about ourselves. It will be an outward thought. And it will guide us to break through the barrier in difficult cases. I'm talking about relational cases among ourselves as God's people, whether it's with ourselves (if we're the problem) or if someone else is. But this is invaluable to us all. We'll learn to incite others to good works so that we become joyous, happy and unified. And by yielding to that Spirit of love we won't forsake getting

together with the brotherhood on the Sabbath so that we can give of ourselves in the increasingly difficult times that we live. We need that, most definitely.

Though it's not referenced here, we'll seek to stir up love and good works anywhere among those who bear the fruit of the Spirit, regardless of the organization they call home. Because there is only one Church. If that effort isn't immediately reciprocated, what will we do? How will we respond through the love aspect of the Holy Spirit? We'll be steadfast in yielding to the Holy Spirit because we know by faith that love suffers long and is kind. And we know that love never fails. And so, we'll be steadfast. That's what we get through the power, this love aspect of the Holy Spirit.

Let's look at some very encouraging words from the Apostle Paul.

2 Corinthians 3:2 You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men;

If you really think about it, we are read by people, there's no question about that. A person's life, how we've lived, the consistent way we've lived life is as powerful as any sermon that you've ever heard, or more powerful. The viewer's eye takes in more than the ear, at least right at first. People look and they see what we're doing. And then pretty soon they're interested to hear something. That's how it works. Many people get their best chance of coming to believe God and then developing on from there by what they see in our lives. So, whether or not we yield to the Holy Spirit is going to be manifested in what others see. Obviously we have to ask ourselves is our gospel message good news or is it bad? That's something we need to think about.

3 clearly you are manifestly an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.

That's the epistle that each and everyone of us want to be and it absolutely can be true of us, and it is true in many, many cases. We're all in a process of growth. We want people to see God's glory in the softness of our hearts, which have been written on by the Holy Spirit of God. That's what we want people to see. We want them to see spiritually powerful, sound-minded, loving people because we're going to stand out. Those who have those qualities will stand out more and more as time goes on.

But because we are sound-minded, we know that all is not as it should be, even in our own lives. We know that. And it's not as it should be within the body, the one body, the Church as well. That's a given. And that's why Paul urgently reminded Timothy to stir up the Spirit. It wasn't a lackadaisical, "Oh, by the way...". It was a real thing. Stir it up! And that's what we need to be doing.

So, in concluding, let's talk a little now about doing this very vital thing of stirring up the Holy Spirit! How do we go about that? I have four points for us here, very, very simple points. The first is:

1. Deal in truth

A very short and sweet verse:

1 Thessalonians 5:19 Do not quench the Spirit.

That's a fact. It's a piece of truth. Don't quench it! It's not a good thing to do. It's very helpful to us. The Holy Spirit here is likened to fire. It's something that can be quenched. When yielded to, it can purge, it can purify, and it can refine us. If we don't yield to it, we're throwing water on it. We're throwing water on the fire that's there for our benefit. We'd be quenching it. And we know what that means. It means to put it out. When the fire goes out, it goes out. It means to lose it. We don't want any part of that.

We need to ask ourselves what sort of things can quench it? Then we reflect back on what the Holy Spirit is. We talked about it numerous times. It's a spirit of power, it's a spirit of love and it's a spirit of a sound mind. It gives us, first of all, power to do good things, things that are according to God's will.

So, we could ask ourselves, "Am I doing anything that defies God's will in my life?". As we prayerfully reflect on our day, and we prayerfully reflect on the course of our life in general, is there some part of the old man or the old woman that I like just the way it is according to my will? "I don't think it's as bad as what some say." Is there any part of it that we look at that way? Concerning power, we could ask ourselves questions like that.

We could also ask concerning love, "Is there some aspect of love that I'm trampling on? Am I competing rather than loving my brother or sister as myself?" Or we could ask ourselves this: "Am I truly sound-minded (when we look at that other aspect of the Holy Spirit)? Am I truly sound-minded? Is truth my standard always or just when it's comfortable or convenient?"

We could flesh out these three areas with all kinds of questions. We can personalize it to our own lives. If we desire more than anything to come to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, we'll ask the hard questions and yield ourselves to the answers. We'll respond.

In John chapter 15:26, Christ identified the Holy Spirit as the spirit of truth. So, we can't be or won't be receptive to it if we can't or won't deal in truth. We have to deal in truth if we're going to be receptive to the Holy Spirit.

But let's define what it is that grieves and can potentially quench God's Spirit in the very simplest of terms. Instead of taking an hour to go through this, let's bring it down to

the bottom line. When we reflect back on the first part of this message, we were talking about all the miraculous good associated with the Holy Spirit.

When we look at those aspects which were broken down by Paul for us, power, love and a sound mind, everything about those aspects are selfless. That's one of the common denominators of all of the aspects of the Holy Spirit, selflessness. They reflect Christ's example in how He lived His life. They reflect our Father's mind.

So, we can rightly conclude that selfishness has the capacity to grieve and then to quench the Holy Spirit, except that we turn and go the other way. That's why, again, Paul admonished Timothy to stir it up. We have to be thinking about these things so that we don't grieve the Holy Spirit. We'll consider a couple of examples now in this line of thought. Paul says:

1 Corinthians 3:1 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people (And you would expect that to be able to speak to brethren as spiritual, but he says) but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ.

2 I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able;

3 for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?

In other words, men without the Holy Spirit. That's just standard form carnality. This is an example of selfishness and all of the ugly competitiveness, strife and division associated with it. Paul said it's carnal. This is something that is grieving the Holy Spirit. What he's described here, this is the fruit of self. We want to bring it down to that bottom line so we can remember it. It's the fruit of self.

We could and should look at this across organizational lines, just as we could and should look at our own weekly congregation where we attend. And don't look at it in terms of what others are doing, but what we are doing personally. That's how we have to look at this. We each are accountable for what we do with the Holy Spirit and no one else. We have to be concerned about whether or not we are grieving the Holy Spirit or whether we're utilizing it.

We'll contrast that example with this one. Paul says:

2 Peter 1:21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

In light of what we've been discussing, prophecy never came by self-will. It can't happen. Notice that they're not called "holy men of self". That's not what they were. They were holy men of God who did what they did yielded to the Holy Spirit and not to self. The truth is that nothing good ever comes from selfishness. Power, love and a

sound mind come from yielding to God and the Holy Spirit. That's the fact you want to cling to. The second point is that:

2. Faith unleashes God's power in us.

We can look at an example.

Acts 6:5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, (along with these other fellows, fine men.)

Stephen stood out among early converts. Most notable is that he was full of faith and the Holy Spirit. This adds to what we've just covered. If we're full of faith in God and we're not full of faith in self, we'll also be full of the Holy Spirit. Self-will and self-righteousness, exalted above others, stifles the Holy Spirit. Let's go to chapter 7 here in Acts and verse 51. Here Stephen verifies what we've just said.

Acts 7:51 "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.

The stiff-necked. If you want another word for it, it's self-worshippers. The stiff-necked are self-worshippers. They can't help but resist the gift of God's power. Their faith is in themselves. Their faith is in their own will, their own desire. They were as their predecessors before them. In other words, their fathers before them. Let's look at an example of the fathers, those who preceded those in Stephen's time.

Isaiah 30:1 "Woe to the rebellious children," says the LORD, "Who take counsel, but not of Me, and who devise plans, but not of My Spirit, that they may add sin to sin;

In other words, they can dig a really deep pit quicker and not get out of it. When we read that word "woe", it is never a good sign of things to come. It's not good. It always means things are not going to go well.

Israel's faith was in their own reasoning, their own ability, and therefore they gave no thought to the Holy Spirit guiding them to come to God's will in their circumstances. They were faithless and without the Holy Spirit. And again, that's why it says "woe to them". They were without them both. The third point is to:

3. Ask God for the Holy Spirit.

It really goes without saying, but we'll look at a verse here. And of course it is important that we talk about this because in a place it says, "You have not, because you ask not." We need to ask. Here Christ says:

Luke 11:13 If you then, being evil... (In other words, if you're not perfect like His Father or Himself.)

13 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, (and we all desire to give good gifts) how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”

If you follow the logic of the verse, God can't wait. He's eager, eager, eager to give His Spirit to the humble and faithful who seek it. It won't work for the self-willed, but with the right and genuine attitude it's there for the asking. And we need to do the asking. The fourth point then is to:

4. Work with the Holy Spirit.

1 Timothy 4:13 Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

14 Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.

15 Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.

16 Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

Everything that Paul says here relates to working with the Holy Spirit. Everything! By it we can come to understand what it is that we read. If we're studying some particular aspect of history, let's say, in the Bible, in scripture, we can come to understand it. We can perceive how to properly exhort one of our friends in the Church or others. We can perceive how to do that. We can gain and retain more, and more about doctrinal matters, as well. We can talk about all the other things we've already discussed within this message. All of those things require working with the Holy Spirit, working with the gift that we've been given.

Hopefully now we have a good idea of what the Holy Spirit can do for us, and I know we've all thought about that a lot. But it is priceless because it is a miraculous Spirit that we've been given and hopefully now we understand better how to stir it up and to use it in the days ahead. ◇