

The Holy Spirit of God

*“The Spirit of God
moved upon the
face of the waters.”*
—*Genesis 1:2*

THE BIBLE’S TESTIMONY

concerning the ‘Spirit of God’ and its relationship to all his mighty acts is a very important subject. The Spirit of God is referred to hundreds of times in the Bible. In the New Testament, it is usually called the “Holy Spirit”—often mistranslated “Holy Ghost” in the *King James Version*. In the Old Testament, “spirit” is translated from the Hebrew word *ruwach*, which Prof. Strong defines as ‘wind.’ The same word is many times translated ‘breath.’ In the New Testament, “spirit” translates the Greek word *pneuma*, meaning, according to Prof. Strong, ‘breath, or current of air.’

Let us not conclude, however, that the Holy Spirit of God is merely wind, or a blast of air. The ancient Hebrew and Greek languages did not contain specific words for everything, and this was particularly true in expressing thoughts pertaining to God and his mighty works. However, through use, many words with specific meanings took on

additional meanings. Thus *ruwach* in the Hebrew language and *pneuma* in the Greek language, because of their original application to the invisible power of the wind, came to mean any invisible force or power, and were used to describe the invisible power of God.

GOD'S INVISIBLE POWER

Broadly speaking, then, the Spirit of God is the invisible power of God. It is the invisible, indefinable energy of the Creator by which he accomplishes all his good purposes. It is that mighty power which cannot be thwarted, and which enables the Creator to accomplish all the good pleasure of his will. God says, "I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it." (Isa. 46:11) The Creator also says, "My word . . . that goeth forth out of my mouth . . . shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."—Isa. 55:11

The Spirit, or power, of God is manifest throughout all creation. It was the Spirit of God that transformed this planet from an empty, shapeless mass into the beautiful earth which it is, and made it capable of sustaining countless varieties of things animate and inanimate. In this work of transformation, it was God's Spirit which set the bounds of the mighty oceans so that the Creator could say, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed."—Job 38:11

It was God's power that brought forth the grass and herbs in the earth. It was his Spirit that implemented his decree, "Let the waters bring forth

abundantly the moving creature that hath life." Surely, "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." (Gen. 1:2,20) It was God's Spirit that fulfilled his Word, "Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind." (Gen. 1:24) It was his power that operated in the creation of man.

It is the power of God, directed in secret processes known only to him, that enables all life on earth to reproduce its kind. Solomon wrote, "Thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all." (Eccles. 11:5) Solomon was the wisest of all men in his day, but he acknowledged his ignorance of how the Spirit of God operates, and our scientists today can do no better than say "Amen" to Solomon's confession.

We cannot understand the workings of divine power. We can merely marvel at what it accomplishes. Like the wind, it is truly an invisible power. Gravitation is one of its manifestations—He "hangeeth the earth upon nothing." (Job 26:7) But the earth is only an infinitesimal speck in God's great universe. Think of the countless billions of suns and stars and planets, all of which are likewise hung upon 'nothing,' yet they spin around in the orbits designed for them, kept in place by laws designed by God.

Consider the power of the great Creator which energized our sun with power which is given off under a controlled process that furnishes our earth with light and heat. We are told that the sun gives off as much energy in one second as man has used ever since he has been on the earth. Consider, too,

that all the power, or energy, utilized by man has its origin with God. Man cannot produce power except through utilizing the created things of God.

The tremendous energy that is locked up in a single atom is now known to man. Try to figure out the number of atoms contained in all of God's vast creation. It is impossible for the human mind to fathom, but the mere contemplation of it may help us to grasp a little more realistically the almighty power of God. For a Creator possessing the power to lock such unlimited energy into the atom, the preparation of the earth for human habitation was a simple matter.

THE POWER OF LIFE

The Spirit, or power, of God can also be a life-giving power. In Genesis 6:17, *ruwach* is translated "breath" in the expression, "breath of life." We could say, then, that the *ruwach*, or Spirit of God, which moved upon the face of the waters, is also the Spirit of life. Confirming this, we read in Job 12:10 concerning the Creator, "In whose hand is the soul [margin, 'life'] of every living thing, and the breath [*ruwach*] of all mankind." It is this thought that Paul expressed in his sermon on Mars' Hill, when he said of God, "In him we live, and move, and have our being."—Acts 17:28

God's Spirit is the power that created vegetable as well as animal life. "Only God can make a tree," a poet wrote, and this highlights the fact that, but for the Spirit of God, there would be no trees, no flowers, no grass, no fruit, and no vegetables. Scientists can put together all the elements in a blade of grass, but they cannot make it live. In his sermon

to the Athenians, Paul said that God is “not far from every one of us.” (Acts 17:27) Certainly the Spirit of God is manifest all around us—in the beauty and fragrance of the flowers; in his loving provision of food; and in the gorgeous landscapes which enrapture us with their beauty, formed by the blending of myriads of forms of life.

When Paul sought an illustration of Christian activity in proclaiming the Gospel, he likened it to the sowing and watering of seed, but explained that it is God who gives the “increase.” (I Cor. 3:7) How futile would be the work of a farmer in sowing seed in the springtime if God did not give the increase. Some may realize when they see the tiny plants push up the earth and spread forth their leaves that the Spirit of God is working to give the increase, but many do not. How much more every manifestation of life with which we are surrounded would mean if we could just keep in mind that what we see is not merely a chemical process, not a fortuity of ‘blind nature,’ but the working of the Spirit of God.

GOD’S SPIRIT IN MAN

Marvelous though the various manifestations of God’s Spirit are as seen all around us every day of our lives, the Bible reveals that there is a more personal exercise of this power in the lives of his human creatures, especially those who serve him. This comes to light in God’s dealings with Joseph in the land of Egypt. Pharaoh told Joseph his dreams—the dreams which were prophetic of seven years of plenty in the land, to be followed by seven years of famine. “Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of

Pharaoh is one: God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do.” (Gen. 41:25) God ‘shewed’ Pharaoh through his dreams, interpreted by Joseph. Later, Pharaoh said concerning Joseph, “Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?”—vs. 38

The ‘Spirit of God’ was in Joseph. In this instance, God used his power, first to impress the two dreams upon the mind of Pharaoh, and then to reveal to Joseph the prophetic meaning of the dreams. How could that be done, some may ask? The simple answer is that we do not know. Neither do we know how God makes a tree. Surely the mighty power that hangs the earth and every other heavenly body in the universe upon nothing, that gives life to every living thing, would have no difficulty impressing certain thoughts upon the mind of one of his creatures, and giving another the ability to interpret those thoughts.

It was the Creator who designed the human brain, with all its marvelous nerve and blood connections by which it normally functions. It would be a simple matter for him to cause thoughts to enter the brain other than through the normal pathway of the five senses. All life is a miracle so far as our ability to understand its functions is concerned. Once we recognize this, and then accept the fact of the mighty power of God as manifested in all his creative works, the miracles recorded in the Bible will not be stumbling stones to our faith. We will see them to be but commonplace activities in the outworking of the Creator’s wise designs toward his human creatures.

ALL MANNER OF WORKMANSHIP

Another, and different, manifestation of God's Spirit was given to Bezaleel at the time of the construction of the Tabernacle in the wilderness. The need for this is apparent. The Israelites had been held slaves in Egypt for generations, and it is quite unlikely that they were permitted much opportunity to learn the skills of that day, in the use of metals and other materials. When it came time to build the Tabernacle and provide its furnishings, a need arose along this line, and God took care of the situation.

The Lord said to Moses concerning Bezaleel, "I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, To devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, And in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship. And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan: and in the hearts of all that are wise hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee."—Exod. 31:3-6

When Moses received the instructions from the Lord concerning the building of the Tabernacle and the making of all its fine and intricate furnishings, he probably wondered just how it could be done. He may have questioned that any of the Israelites were capable of such an understanding, but it was no problem to God. He, whose Spirit had created the universe and had deposited all the basic metals in the earth, would have no problem in revealing to those whom he chose the needed wisdom

to fashion those metals, to carve the wood of the trees, and to work in 'all manner of workmanship.' He could have commissioned the angels to do this skilled work had he chosen to do so, but in his wisdom he saw best to give some of his human servants the ability to do the work. And, in this, we have still another manner in which God exercises his power, his Spirit.

In connection with the building of the Tabernacle, our attention is called to still another way in which God's Spirit made the undertaking possible. It was marvelous that God gave certain ones the needed ability, but this would have been useless unless they had materials with which to work. At that time, the Israelites were in the wilderness. They could not embark on mining expeditions to secure the needed metals, but even this did not pose a problem to the Lord. By his providences, the Israelites had obtained jewelry of various sorts which they took with them when they left Egypt.—Exod. 12:35,36

THE TABERNACLE SERVICE

When the time came to build the Tabernacle, Moses "spake unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which the LORD commanded, saying, Take ye from among you an offering unto the LORD: whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the LORD; gold, and silver, and brass, And blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair." (chap. 35:4-6) Moses continued the list of all the things which would be needed for the Tabernacle and its furnishings. Then, in verse 21, we

read, "They came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his [the LORD's] spirit made willing, and they brought the LORD's offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all his service, and for the holy garments." Here we see the power of the Lord operating in the hearts of his people, stirring them up to donate the needed materials for the Tabernacle which he had instructed Moses to build. Here again, however, we cannot comprehend how it was done.

Still another and different manifestation of God's power is mentioned in connection with his dealing with Israel during the period of the judges, in which the nation had no central government. This lack of organization made them easy prey to their enemies. When they became oppressed, and destruction threatened, the Lord intervened. He did this by raising up a leader, or a judge, whom he would bless in dispersing Israel's enemies. The record is that the Lord put his Spirit on these; that is, he empowered them to accomplish his purposes.—Judg. 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6

When Zerubbabel was rebuilding the Temple of God in Jerusalem, and encountering much opposition, the "word of the LORD" came to him saying, "Not by might [margin, army], nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts." (Zech. 4:6) This is true of every aspect of our existence if we are endeavoring to serve the Lord and are looking to him for guidance and help. His Spirit, when enlisted on behalf of his people, can overcome every obstacle in order to accomplish his design in their lives.

In Matthew 12:28, Jesus indicates that his mighty miracles were accomplished by the Spirit of God. He shows that this will be true of all the blessings which will reach the people when the kingdom of God is functioning in the earth. Thus, again, we are assured that the promises of God concerning the healing of the sick and the raising of the dead are sure to be fulfilled. His Spirit will allow no defeat of the divine purpose. How thankful we are that such unlimited power is under the control of a just and loving God—a God who is also infinite in wisdom. Because of this, we know that his Spirit will never be used to crush, or injure, his people, but always to lift up and bless.

GOD'S SPIRIT EVERYWHERE

Some mistakenly speak of the 'omnipresence' of God, meaning that he is present everywhere at the same time. This tends to deny the personality of the Creator. However, God's Spirit, his power, is everywhere present, and all at the same time. There is no situation in the whole universe over which he does not have full control, or could not exercise his power. David wrote, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell [*sheol*, the death condition], behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."—Ps. 139:6-10

Here David is expressing his confidence that even in death—that is, in 'hell'—he would not be

beyond the reach of divine power. How strange the psalmist's statement would be if hell were a place of fire and torment; but, when we accept the scriptural fact that hell is the state, or condition, of death, this expression becomes rich with meaning. It is simply David's poetic way of affirming his belief in the promises of God to restore the dead to life. It means that God's Spirit will reach down into the death state and awaken the dead. This was confirmed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead by the almighty power of the Father. God did not leave Jesus' soul, his being, in "hell," in *sheol*.—Ps. 16:10; Acts 2:27,28,32; Eph. 1:19,20

In his original perfection, man enjoyed the favor of God. The Lord caused his face to shine upon him. In the light of God's countenance man enjoyed life, for, as David wrote, in God's favor there is life. (Ps. 30:5) God provided a beautiful garden home for his human creation, instructing him to multiply and fill the earth, and subdue it—that is, make it all like the garden spot which God had provided. This provision of a home and of life was dependent, however, upon man's obedience to divine law, and he disobeyed. Then God hid his face from man, and his human creation became fearful and troubled. They began to die and to return to the dust. Through the sentence of death the breath of life was, so to speak, removed.

RESTORED FROM DEATH

This was not the end of human experience; it was not the final destiny which God had decreed for man. Through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, God made provision for man to be

restored from death. This was to be accomplished by divine power, the same power that gave man life in the first place. The psalmist explains it this way: "Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth." (Ps. 104:30) The Spirit of God which 'moved upon the face of the waters'—that mighty power which brought into being every atom in the whole great universe, that gave life to every living thing—will, in God's due time, reach down into death and restore the dead to life.

Many have supposed that in order to experience life beyond the grave there must be no cessation of life, but this is false reasoning, which does not take into consideration the Spirit, or power, of God. The psalmist uses a good word to help us over our weakness of faith in the power of God. He said, 'Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created.' When the breath of life reverts to God who gave it, and the body returns to dust, the person has actually ceased, temporarily, to exist. He is as though he "had not been." (Eccles. 12:7; Job 10:18,19) Thus, what is actually accomplished by the Spirit of God in the resurrection is a re-creation of the individual.

In the original creation of Adam, while he was given a perfect brain, with perfect capacity to think, to reason, within the limits of the human mind, no thoughts were implanted in his brain. These he received later, being impressed upon his mind through his five senses. In the re-creation of the dead, described in the New Testament by the word 'resurrection,' the original bank of thoughts which the individual had built up during his former span of life will be implanted in the new brain,

and thus he will again be David, or Isaiah, or John Smith.

REMOVING THE CURSE

The psalmist further explains that when the Spirit of God is sent forth for the re-creation of the human race, the ‘face of the earth’ will also be renewed. When God sentenced our first parents to death, he said, “Cursed is the ground for thy sake.” (Gen. 3:17) During the thousand years of Christ’s reign, when the Spirit of God is restoring the dead to life, this curse upon the earth will also be removed. The Revelator declares that “there shall be no more curse.” (Rev. 22:1-3) Then the whole earth will become one vast paradise home in which the restored human race will have the glorious privilege of enjoying God’s favor forever.

How wonderful it is to realize that the Spirit of God which moved upon the face of the waters, and prepared the earth for human habitation, will again manifest itself in restoring the dead to life, and in restoring paradise. God’s Spirit will be exercised to provide blessings of health and life for all mankind. Then God’s human creatures will join in the song of praise first sung by David, “O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.”—Ps. 104:24 ■

“The works of the LORD are great, . . . The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness.”

—Psalm 111:2,7,8