



ISSUE

23.15

April 11, 2021

Faithful Sayings

BULLETIN OF
THE OL-
SEN PARK
CHURCH OF
CHRIST

Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM

10:00 AM

11:00 AM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter

Brady McAlister

Jeff Nunn

Deacons:

Ben Hight

Blake McAlister

Walker McAnear

Sam Nunn

Lance Purcell

Justin Smiley

Kevin Wise

Trevor Yontz

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope

Balancing Concepts of the Spirit's Influence (1)

By Kyle Pope

The great work of brethren during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to reject denominational concepts and restore simple New Testament doctrine went a long way towards sharpening our teaching on the Holy Spirit. No longer would we imagine that the Holy Spirit miraculously chose some to move to faith while leaving others in helpless predestined depravity. It is the Spirit-revealed word, the Spirit's sword, that has the power to move any soul to faith if it is only heard, believed, and obeyed (Rom. 10:17; Heb. 4:12-13). Although a few voices unwittingly seem to long for a return to such error, most brethren firmly reject the extremes of Calvinistic or Charismatic concepts of the Spirit's influence. Among us, our struggle is generally an issue of terminology, balance, and clear communication. We ask, "Do you believe in a personal or a representative indwelling of the Spirit?" Or, "Does the Holy Spirit work apart from or only through the word?" The answers given may lead us to assume that a person believes things they actually do not. How can Scripture help us avoid this confusion and accurately affirm what the Spirit has revealed about His influence?

Defining "Spirit"

Let's start with recognizing the limits of our knowledge. Both Hebrew and Greek use terms associated with *breath* and *wind* to ex-

press the concept of “spirit.” Such words describe God’s nature. **“God is Spirit”** (John 4:24a), which stands in contrast to “flesh.” Paul said the spirit and flesh are **“contrary [lit. “lay opposite”] to one another”** (Gal. 5:17). Jesus said, **“a spirit does not have flesh and bone”** (Luke 24:39, NKJV). Man has an inner part of himself that is “spirit.” The book of Job teaches, **“there is a spirit in man”** (Job 32:8a). In creation, **“the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul”** (Gen. 2:7, KJV). Physical death, by definition, is the separation of that spirit from the flesh. James said, **“The body without the spirit is dead”** (Jas. 2:26a). In death, **“the dust**

will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it” (Eccl. 12:7, NKJV; cf. Eccl. 8:8; Ps 146:4; 104:29).

This original *giving* of spirit in our creation has great significance. Animals have spirits (Eccl. 3:21), just as **“all flesh”** has within it the **“breath [Heb. *ruach*=“spirit”] of life”** (Gen. 6:17; 7:15), but what God gave to man was different. The full passage from Job says, **“there is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding”** (Job 32:8). Man’s spirit is from God, but it is also separate and distinct, not merely a borrowed life force. We have **“been made in the similitude of God”** (Jas. 3:9). Since **“God is Spirit”** (John 4:24a), our likeness to Him must then refer to a likeness our spirit bears to His Spirit. The Hebrew writer calls God, **“the Father of spirits”** (Heb. 12:9). God is our **“Father”** (not according to the flesh—our earthly fathers fill that role). Our spirits are brought forth from Him. Zechariah says God, **“forms the spirit of man within him”** (Zech. 12:1b). Part of this likeness involves a shared eternal nature. God has an **“eternal Spirit”** (Heb. 9:14) that has always existed and will continue to exist forever (Deut. 32:40). Man’s spirit had a beginning, God formed it, but like His Spirit, it is eternal in nature. Paul, in talking about the nature of our **“inward man”** said, **“the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal”** (2 Cor. 4:16b, 18b). In eternity, following the resurrection and Final Judgment, this eternal spirit will either be clothed in a spiritual resurrection body no longer subject to pain and decay or in a body eternally subject to sorrow and unending



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corruption (Matt. 25:51; 1 Cor. 15:42-44; Rev. 14:10-11; 20:10, 15).

So, God is Spirit and we are spirits who bear His likeness, but Scripture also describes a triune aspect of the makeup of the one God over all creation. This one God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). These are not three gods, but each has His own distinct will. God the Son obeyed God the Father (Heb. 5:8) and yielded to His will (Luke 22:42). God the Son returned to heaven, while God the Holy Spirit was sent to the apostles (John 16:17). God the Holy Spirit would not speak of His own authority but what He heard (John 16:13). At Jesus's baptism, God the Son was baptized, God the Father spoke from heaven, and God the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove (Matt. 3:16-17).

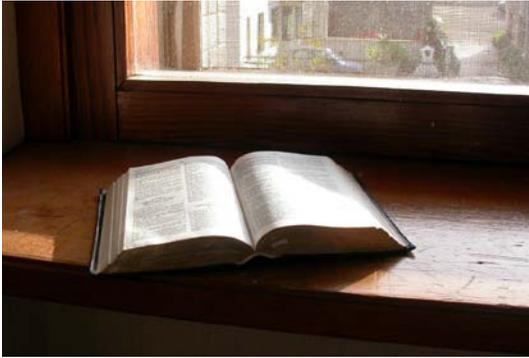
Essentially that is the extent of our knowledge about that aspect of God called "Spirit" and that part of our inner being known as our "spirit." Both are unseen. God is the "**invisible God**" (Col. 1:15), yet His Spirit fills heaven and earth (Ps. 139:7-10; Jer. 23:24). While the calling up of the spirit of Samuel (1 Sam. 28:13) and the Transfiguration (Matt. 17:3) are notable exceptions, as observed above, our "**inward man**" is "**not seen**" yet "**eternal**" (2 Cor. 4:16b, 18b). Neither God's Spirit nor ours can be measured or quantified with our senses. Neither can be dissected and scientifically analyzed. Both transcend the natural world, while intersecting with it in various ways. So, before we push too hard in trying to explain the scope of the influence of God's Spirit upon our own spirit, let's first state clearly that all we can know about this vast topic is what God has chosen to reveal to us. "**The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever**" (Deut. 29:29). I suspect that in this case, questions we have about God's Spirit or ours, are not kept "**secret**" to cause us frustration. On the contrary, how are we as finite, temporal,

creatures of dust to even conceive of things of such eternal magnitude? God has told us what we need to know and what we are capable of understanding this side of eternity.

The Holy Spirit in a Christian

To frail creatures of dust, God has given a remarkable promise. Joel was told, "**it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh**" (Joel 2:28a). On the Day of Pentecost, Peter said this promise was fulfilled (Acts 2:17). Yet, what does that mean? How was God's Spirit *poured out* and how was this done upon "**all flesh**"? Clearly, this is not teaching that God indwells all flesh as God the Son became flesh (John 1:14). Christians do not become mini gods. We should note of Jesus, although He was God in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16, KJV, NKJV), even He was said to be anointed "**with the Holy Spirit**" (Acts 10:38)—which is not describing a change in His nature but a way of describing the source of His actions.

On Pentecost, the Holy Spirit fell upon the apostles



(Acts 2:1-4). This was a special outpouring of the Spirit that carried promises unique to the apostles. Jesus said they would **“receive power”** in this event (Acts 1:8). He promised them the Spirit would **“guide”** them **“into all truth”** (John 16:13), teach them **“all things”** (John 14:26a), and remind them of **“all things that I said to you”** (John 14:26b). They would not need to prepare

ahead of time what to say. They were promised that when they spoke, **“it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit”** (Mark 13:11; cf. Mat. 10:20; Luke 12:12). These promises were not made to all Christians. Only the apostles, the household of Cornelius—as evidence that Gentiles could receive the gospel (Acts 10:47; cf. Num. 11:25), and those upon whom the apostles laid their hands (Acts 8:18) enjoyed the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in this way.

Many Scriptures, however, affirm that the Holy Spirit would be given to all true believers. John speaks of, **“the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive”** identifying it further as **“the Holy Spirit”** (John 7:39). Peter spoke of **“the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him”** (Acts 5:32). Paul urged self-control over our bodies, because **“your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you”** (1 Cor. 6:19). How do we understand this aspect of the *pouring out* of God’s Spirit? In our next article we will explore this question.



Faithful Sayings Issue 23.15 April 11, 2021

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