

when words fail us in our appeals to God, Paul says, **“Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered”** (Rom. 8:26). This is not teaching that the Holy Spirit acts as an intercessor in the manner that as Jesus does (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25; 1 Tim. 2:5). It is addressing how God knows the content of our hearts. Paul continues, **“Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God”** (Rom. 8:27; cf. Eph. 2:18). As stated in Proverbs, God’s Spirit through our spirit *searches* the heart. What does He find there? Earlier in the same chapter Paul declared, **“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God”** (Rom. 8:16). The Spirit-revealed word,

the message of salvation, has gone out into all the world. In that sense, the Holy Spirit has been *poured out* on **“all flesh,”** but as the Spirit searches all human hearts does it find God dwelling in all hearts as He should? No. Paul told the Romans, **“you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His”** (Rom. 8:9).

This paints a curious picture. The Spirit searches to see if God’s Spirit is within the heart! Paul told the Ephesians, **“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory”** (Eph. 1:13-14). He told the Corinthians God **“has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee”** (2 Cor. 1:22; cf. 5:5). In ancient times a seal was pressed into clay to indicate ownership or authorship. How does this apply to the imagery here? We noticed above, that a Christian is led by the Spirit as he sets his mind on the things revealed by the Spirit. This is allowing God to dwell within us. This brings forth fruit: **“the fruit of the Spirit.”** Like a seal impressed in the clay of our hearts, it demonstrates whether God’s Spirit lives within us or not. As the Spirit searches the heart, He either finds the imprint of His work or finds it lacking. Its presence within our hearts is our guarantee of eternal life. Paul wrote, **“if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you”** (Rom. 8:11). Oh, that every soul would allow Christ to dwell in our hearts through faith (Eph. 3:17)!



4700 Andrews Ave.
Amarillo TX 79106
806-352-2809
www.olsenpark.com

Faithful Sayings Issue 23.16 April 18, 2021



ISSUE

23.16

April 18, 2021

Faithful Sayings

BULLETIN OF
THE OL-
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Services

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10:00 AM
11:00 AM
Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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Brady McAlister
Jeff Nunn

Deacons:

Ben Hight
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Walker McNear
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Justin Smiley
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Evangelist:

Kyle Pope

Balancing Concepts of the Spirit’s Influence (2)

By Kyle Pope

In the previous article we began to consider how Scripture can help us accurately affirm concepts regarding the Spirit’s influence. We explored the limits of our knowledge regarding how to define the term “spirit,” whether in reference to God’s Spirit or our own. We then began to investigate the promise of Joel 2:28, where God says, **“I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh”** and Peter’s declaration of its fulfillment in Acts 2:17. Having seen that this had special and unique application to the apostles, we now want to discuss how the *pouring out* of God’s Spirit affects all Christians and **“all flesh.”**

“Spirit” as Mindset

To understand Biblical teaching on this subject fully we must also recognize another important way in which the term “spirit” was used of one’s attitude and mindset. John the Baptist was to come in **“the spirit and power of Elijah”** (Luke 1:17). After Elijah was taken up, it was said, **“The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha”** (2 Kings 2:15). This did not mean that Elijah was reincarnated in Elisha or John. On the contrary, to share one’s attitude, mindset, values, and purpose was to share one’s spirit. We still speak today of a “patriotic spirit” or of one with a “free spirit,” but Biblical writers used these terms with a deeper sense. In a Biblical sense, thoughts and attitudes originate from the mind of a spirit whether God’s Spirit, or the spirit of created beings. In Scripture, to follow or

accept teaching is to accept the influence of a spirit. John warned, **“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world”** (1 John 4:1). This is not describing demonic possession or internal mental manipulation but teaching that is either contrary to truth or in harmony with it. John explained further, **“By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God”** (1 John 4:2-3a; cf. 1 Cor. 12:3).

This is evident throughout Scripture. When James and John wanted to call down fire upon a Samaritan village, Jesus told them, **“You do not know what manner of spirit you are of”** (Luke 9:55). Their attitude did not reflect God’s Spirit at work within them, but as Paul would say elsewhere it was **“the spirit of the world”** (1 Cor. 2:12) or **“spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience”** (Eph. 2:2). Faithful brethren are said to walk **“in the same**

spirit” (2 Cor. 12:18; cf. 4:13), while those who accept error **“receive a different spirit”** and a **“different gospel”** (2 Cor. 11:4).

Words and “Spirit”

In Scripture, there is an inseparable connection between words and the spirit that produced or influenced those words. As a result, in Biblical language, to allow words to influence the heart is to allow a spirit to influence the heart. In Proverbs, as Wisdom personified **“calls aloud”** (Prov. 1:20), she promises, **“I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you”** (1:23). In Micah, the Lord asks, **“Is the Spirit of the LORD restricted?”** then asks the same thing in another way, **“Do not My words do good to him who walks uprightly?”** (Micah 2:7). God’s Spirit is not restricted because God’s Spirit works through His revealed words. God’s Spirit and God’s words are often set parallel to one another. In Isaiah, God says, **“As for Me, says the LORD, this is My covenant with them: My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth”** (Isa. 59:21a). That is not saying God’s Spirit is only the force of His words, but it is describing God’s Spirit working in Israel through the words His Spirit revealed.

Jesus makes this connection explicit about His own teaching. He declared, **“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life”** (John 6:63). Jesus called the Holy Spirit **“the Spirit of Truth”** (John 14:17; 15:26) and John would even say **“the Spirit is truth”** (1 John 5:6). Paul asked the Galatians, **“Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?”** (Gal. 3:2; cf. Rom. 10:17). Notice that Paul either equates **“hearing”** the words that produced faith with *receiving* **“the Spirit”** (or in conjunction with it). We must remember the description of Paul gives of the **“sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”** (Eph. 6:17; cf. Heb. 4:12).

Inspired writers were said to speak **“by the Holy Spirit”** (Mark 12:36; cf. Matt. 22:43; Acts 1:16; 28:25). David said, **“The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue”** (2 Sam. 23:2). This fact allows New Testament writers to describe the interpretation of Scripture as listening to the Spirit (Heb. 3:7; 9:7-8). So, to reject the word of God is to resist or reject the Spirit of God (Acts 7:51; 1 Thess. 4:8). To accept the words the Spirit revealed is to

receive and be led by the Spirit. Jesus said, **“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him”** (John 14:23). John said, **“he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us”** (1 John 3:24). Paul told the Ephesians that **“Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith”** (Eph. 3:17). The pouring out of God’s Spirit on believers allows not only the Holy Spirit, but also God the Son and God the Father to dwell within the Christian (Rom. 8:9-10; John 14:23; cf. Matt. 10:20; 1 Pet. 1:11).

As the New Testament teaches it, focusing on the things the Holy Spirit has revealed is being led by the Spirit. Paul wrote, **“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit”** (Rom. 8:5). This is a choice. Paul commanded Christians to **“be filled with the Spirit”** (Eph. 5:18) and to **“walk in the Spirit”** not fulfilling the **“lust of the flesh”** (Gal. 5:16; cf. 5:25). This is a choice with eternal consequences. **“For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life”** (Gal. 5:8). **“For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live”** (Rom. 8:13). This choice defines our identity. **“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God”** (Rom. 8:14). Being led by the Spirit, through focusing the things revealed by the Spirit, produces fruit in our lives, **“the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control”** (Gal. 5:22-23a; cf. Eph. 5:9, KJV, NKJV). This is how it may be said that Christians experience **“righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit”** (Rom. 14:17; cf. 1 Thess. 1:6). Paul says, **“to be spiritually minded is life and peace”** (Rom. 8:6). This is how **“the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us”** (Rom. 5:5; cf. Col. 1:8). God doesn’t make us (or force us) to feel love, joy, or peace, but these things are fruit born from

allowing the Spirit’s sword to shape our hearts and lives. This is the **“comfort of the Holy Spirit”** (Acts 9:31) the **“comfort of the Scriptures”** (Rom. 15:4).

“On All Flesh”

We have seen the special sense in which the apostles received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in power, and the sense in which believers can be filled with and led by the Spirit as we set our minds on and apply the words revealed by the Spirit, but there is one final element of the promise of Joel 2:28 that we must explore. How did this outpouring come upon **“all flesh”**? Obviously, the term *flesh* is limited here to human beings. Only we share the spiritual similitude to God that would allow God’s Spirit to impact our own spirit in any enduring way. To answer this, let’s notice some specific promises regarding the Spirit’s work.

The Bible affirms the fact that God’s omnipresent Spirit searches all human hearts. Proverbs tells us, **“The spirit of a man is the lamp of the LORD, searching all the inner depths of his heart”** (Prov. 20:27). Paul appeals to this fact in offering comfort to Christians regarding their prayers. In those times