

Spirit of Christ

The Giver who is the Gift



A Discipleship School

David Boan

5



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Unit 5
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“...and I will pray the Father, and He will give to you another Counsellor, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you.”
John 14.16-17[RSV].

Unit 4 - In Review: stated as an outcome

The costly work for God, in bringing His love to bear upon our lives, has been presented against the background of his holiness which expresses love in an exclusive and preferential way. The love of God is seen in the pre-occupation of the Father with the Son and the Son with the Father in the Spirit. It is in his love He sees us, in that Son, before the creation of the world, as the Person through whom He will deal with all men and women.

The Father's outgoing, holy love for us achieves His redeeming purpose in the sending of His Son, his eternal Word. This incarnation of the eternal Word of God involved the laying aside of His glory and, as a great humiliation, taking flesh; and so taking up into Himself our fallen humanity as a true man without ceasing to be God.

Offering Himself as a true sacrifice for sin, in a way that totally engages the holiness of God, He brought deep satisfaction to God, Who has used this way to reconcile the rebellious world to Himself. A deep judgment on sin was established from the Godward side. From the human side God is found not counting our sins against us.

In the resurrection of Jesus Christ out from among the dead, God has vindicated Him, sanctified Him, restored His glory, and enthroned Him as a Son who has all authority in heaven and earth; the resurrected God man is a true King. He has begun to reign over the kingdom of this world.

From that time, world rebellion, brokenness, and spiritual poverty, so well established through Adam's rebellion, has been revoked; a new age has dawned and a new creation has come. God's kingdom comes in the lives of responsive men and women who, living as reconciled to Him, obey Him from the heart, with liberty as sons.

In the ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven, offering Himself to God by the Spirit, a true, unimpeded access to God has been inaugurated for men and women through His flesh. Ungodly people, who are justified and sanctified in that God man, may now draw near to God in deep intimacy. The resurrected, ascended God man is a true Priest.

The church of Jesus Christ, in heaven and upon the earth, is a kingdom of priests. Their obedience to God is a spiritual worship, for it comes from the heart and brings Him much pleasure because they are found to be in Christ Jesus – the acceptable One. Their praise, adoration and intercessions reach to God, they are heard by their heavenly Father as they lay down their lives as He did, for His sake.

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1 - What God now works "in us" by the Spirit.

177 - What God has worked "for us" in Christ, He now works "in us" through the Spirit of Christ.

In our first four units, we have been considering what God has already done "for us" in Christ. This is an objective work. That is, it stands by itself as a true and fixed matter without any reference to what we think or believe about it. As a thing done and accomplished, it stands outside of us, having a reality of its own because it was determined and done by God Himself.

We come now to consider what God is doing "in us". It too is an objective work of God but because it is done "in us" and calls for a response, it has a subjective element to it. It involves us in understanding the work of the Holy Spirit as the Person in Whom we are united to Christ. If Christ is our Redeemer, then it is the Spirit of Christ Who applies the redemption God has won for us in Christ.

The work of God "for us" was done entirely "in" the Person of Jesus Christ. We have seen that He, as the Word of God, took flesh and, voluntarily of his own will, He entered our world, taking up into Himself our flesh and broken condition, so that He might redeem it. Nothing done for our salvation is done outside of His Person.

178 - The resurrection manifests the victory of the cross

The resurrection is the statement that the work of the cross was in fact a victory. It is the way that we are given to know [as distinct from the work that was done] that what was accomplished by the death was in fact accomplished. For, as we have seen [2013 Jesus Exalted DS04 #140] the resurrection vindicated the Lord Jesus before all the world. This vindication raised the question that His humiliation in taking flesh, and particularly His death, must now be read in a different light to the superficial judgment men and women made upon Him.

The resurrection is not the victory itself, for the work of the cross is one thing and the resurrection another. The death of Jesus was a sacrifice, set forth as a propitiation for sin by the Father. What was done in the resurrection was different. So, as works achieved by God they need to be distinguished.

This unit looks back to the glorification of Jesus in His resurrection as the sure basis for knowing the death of Christ was a victory won. We are those who receive this glorified life by receiving His Spirit. We must now understand how it is that we are practically united to the risen Christ and, if we are now joined to a person, how it is that we "have" Him.

2 - Receiving the Holy Spirit

179 - The Holy Spirit at work in the life of Jesus

See Boan, [2013] God as man #57-63 : Luke 2.49

In the world that God has made, the Holy Spirit of God carries out - executes - the purposes of God. He is the One who powerfully brings the plans of God to reality upon the earth. He is the personal activity of God beside us and among us.

Just as He executed God's plan in creation, hovering over the waters, so He does in the new creation. The Spirit of God "overshadowed" Mary in the conception of the Lord Jesus. That the Word of God took flesh is a mystery [Boan [2013] God as man #57-63]. The divine Son was, in reality, found in human nature.

The baby in Mary's arms was not God pretending to be an infant boy. It was God coming to us as man; a matter that involves starting as a little boy and growing up. It was God assuming humanity, experiencing the sort of life a little boy has: growth, dependency on parents, what it means to feel ignorant, and also the joy of discovery of new things. In the humanity of Jesus, God comes to experience these things from the "inside" - as it were.

As it was in his conception and birth, so the progress in Jesus' mental and spiritual development was a work of the Spirit. The Spirit would have given Him the awareness of who He was and made Him inwardly aware of His divine Sonship constantly. At the age of twelve, we have the record that He knew that God was His Father [Luke 2.49] and that He must be about His business.

In Jesus' life the Holy Spirit was present at His Baptism conveying to Him the pleasure of His Father when He took His stance with sinners. The Spirit then remained on Him, to empower Him for the subsequent ministry He would do. All that He accomplished in his public ministry was a work of the Spirit who motivated him to enter into the desert to be tempted; confronting Satan for us [Matthew 4.1]. It was, "by the Spirit" Jesus cast out demons [Matthew 12.28]. He taught in words that were "spirit and life" [John 6.63] - words that did not *speak about* life but were *life themselves*. And, it was in the power of the Spirit He healed the sick [Luke 4.14-21, 31-36]. Peter would later summarise this co-working of Jesus with the Spirit as "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power" [Acts 10.38].

180 - A man can receive the Spirit of God "on" or "upon" him

Recorded in the Old Testament are examples of men upon whom the Spirit of God came. The sign that the Spirit had come was that they did the works of God, especially prophesying, as in the case of Saul. In each of these cases, it is clear that what is coming

upon a human is God's Spirit. David distinguishes between God renewing his own spirit - the spirit of the man, [Psalm 51.10] and God's Spirit being present with him, by which David understands God's Spirit Who comes and goes and may be taken away from him [Psalm 51.11].

With all these examples, men are the agents of God and the Spirit of God supernaturally endows them with abilities. There is a work of God done by the power of God's Spirit through the man. And it is clear, if the Spirit departs from the man, so does his ability to do the works that depend on that Spirit. The man is a channel, although he can be changed through being the anointed man of God for a task [1 Samuel 10.16].

181- Receiving the spirit of another man, to share his life and power

2 Kings 2; Malachi 3.1; 4.5

The Old Testament records the Spirit of God coming upon individuals. But can a man receive the spirit of another man? This question is raised by the final exchange between Elijah and his disciple, Elisha. For us it opens an important possibility.

The life of Elijah the Tishbite is recorded in 1 Kings 17- 2 Kings 2. His prophetic ministry was exercised at a time when the king of Israel, Ahab, provoked the Lord by erecting an altar to Baal in Samaria and making Asherah as well [1 Kings 16.32-33]. Ahab's wife, Jezebel, habitually entertained at the king's table 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the Asherah who were protected by her patronage [1 Kings 18.19]. This conjunction of the rule of a weak king with a wicked wife brought much trouble to Israel and Elijah. Incidentally, similar circumstances were present at the time of the death of John the Baptist, the Elijah who was to come [Malachi 3.1 and 4.5].

Elijah proclaimed to Ahab that there would be no rain except at his word for three years - a sure sign of God's discipline upon Israel. At the end of three years, Elijah challenged Israel to decide between serving the Lord or other gods. This challenge, on Mt Carmel, resulted in God's fire coming at Elijah's request and the slaughter of the prophets of Baal at the brook Kishon.

Jezebel was enraged and, under her threat, Elijah fled into the wilderness. He feared that he was about to die. He thought he was alone in following the Lord. There, in the desert, it was told him that, as well as anointing Hazael to be king over his country Aram, he was to anoint Jehu as king over Israel and Elisha as prophet in his place [1 Kings 19.16]; the latter he did by throwing his mantle [cloak] over Elisha as he was ploughing. It was said to Elijah that all of these three men would be instruments of death and vengeance of God over His enemies, by which He meant those denying Him as God and worshipping other gods.

[1] For Elisha, the call to serve his master preceded the receiving of his spirit.

Elisha became Elijah's disciple, following and serving him [1 Kings 19.21] as Elijah continued in his important task of proclaiming what God had given him to say.

Notice that Elisha did not understand all the meaning of what his master was doing; but in that he served Elijah, acting as a son does with his father, he obeyed him and carried out his bidding. In this way, as a disciple of the man, Elisha was caught up into a great work. He was called to follow his master, yet without fully understanding where his master fitted into the contemporary history of Israel's encounter with God.

There is a parallel here with the disciples of Jesus at a time of Israel's visitation by God. Israel was under discipline, racked by demons and with their land occupied by a foreign power, whom they were serving unwillingly. As Elijah, in obedience to God, threw his mantle over Elisha, so Jesus, in response to His Father, called his disciples to follow him, which they did. They served Him and obeyed Him, sharing in His carrying out his mission.

They did not understand that they would later be caught up into His task. Even when He explained His task and death, they did not understand that either. However, they had a promise from Jesus that they would not simply be slaves, but would be friends, who would know what the programme of the Father was [John 15.15-17]. Jesus sent them out on a mission - and they found that the power of God attended them. Like the men of the old covenant, they knew what it was to have the Spirit of God "with them"; but they also had a promise of Jesus that He would be "in them" [John 14.17]. By "in them" Jesus meant they would be receiving His spirit [John 16.13-15], that is the spirit of Jesus [Acts 16.7].

[2] The departure of Elijah was foreshadowed

After the defeat and the death of Ahab and Jezebel, Ahaziah reigned in his stead, and he also, trusted in other gods. He died of sickness, under the rebuke of Elijah.

The time came for Elijah to depart. 2 Kings 2 records that Elisha knew that the departure of his master was immanent, a fact confirmed by the sons of the prophets at Bethel and Jericho. These sons of the prophets were schools founded by Elijah and it seems clear that, knowing he is about to go [2 Kings 2.11], Elijah would wish to visit and encourage them in the task. The departure is at the significant place, Gilgal, which commemorates the entry into the promised land under Joshua; the entry to the land of rest from their struggles. Elijah seemed to want to go alone. Accordingly, he endeavoured to get Elisha to wait for him first at Bethel, and then at Jericho - Elisha would have none of that. It is clear that Elisha intended to be present at his master's going.

Elijah struck the waters of Jordan with his mantle and they parted. This was clearly signified a crossing over, an entry for him into rest and to be received into heaven as a faithful servant who has the favour and pleasure of God upon him. Elijah asked what Elisha would want him to do for him before he went [2 Kings 2.9].

[3] *The request of Elisha: a double portion of the spirit of Elijah*

Elisha knew Elijah as the man he served. He knew his moods, his actions and the power of God at work in his life and person. And as it was for Elisha in his prior experience of Elijah, so the disciples of Jesus knew the man “according to the flesh” before they knew him “after the Spirit” [2 Corinthians 5.16].

Elisha asked for a “double portion” [ASV] of Elijah’s spirit to be given him. Notice that Elisha was asking for the spirit of the man Elijah, he was not asking for the spirit of God. He regarded him personally as “father” because he obeyed him as a son - this was the relationship they had. In asking for a “double portion” [Deuteronomy 21.17] of his spirit, Elisha showed that he considered himself as a first born spiritual son of Elijah, and he asked for his inheritance from the man he had obeyed.

Elisha’s understanding of Elijah was that his life as a prophet was expressed in all that he said and did. He wanted Elijah’s spirit; his attachment was to the man he served and his focus had not changed since Elijah had called him. The other prophets saw Elisha’s obedience as that of a servant who had a master. In their minds, should Elijah go, they regarded Elisha as then being a servant who would be without a master. Because they saw death as the only way Elijah would leave them - they therefore saw the relationship coming to an end. Elisha, however, was thinking about an inheritance of a son who had a shared life, the down payment of which was a share in the spirit of his master.

[4] *Beginning of Elisha’s mature work.*

The “son” [Elisha] saw the glorification of his “father” [Elijah] - and in seeing that, he received the spirit of Elijah, and so became a mature son, mature in the way that was like his father. For he now did the work of his “father” - with all his power and authority.

Notice that what is asked for was not an exchange; a substitution of Elisha’s spirit for that of Elijah’s. He was asking to receive a portion, as an inheritance, of Elijah’s spirit. What was foreshadowed was a union of two spirits, such that neither is subsumed into the other. That would make for a third kind; some sort of hybrid. This was a union where the submission of Elisha’s spirit to the other would make for the authority and power of Elijah to be expressed in the life of Elisha. In this way, for Elijah, his continuing, heavenly life was to find expression in the earthly life of Elisha. At the same time for Elisha, there was to be a sharing in the heavenly life of the glorified Elijah such that he would do “his works” amidst the earthly scene where he was.

[5] *A work entirely of God alone*

For Elijah, Elisha’s request was a “hard thing”, because the granting of Elisha’s request was not in Elijah’s authority or control, but only in the power of God. So he made the fulfilment of the request depend on a condition which was not in his control, but in God’s. The condition was that it would be so if Elisha saw Elijah go.

The parallel with Jesus is that the promise of the Spirit for his followers was the Father's promise. The Spirit is asked of the Father, Who sends the Spirit in the name of the Son [John 14.26] and sent by the Son [John 15.26] from the Father.

Elijah left the matter in the hands of God. What God would do would show Elisha whether or not the Lord would fulfil his request. So, Elijah's promise was, that if he saw him go [which means to see his glory], then he would have what he asked - if not, then not.

As Elisha saw the glory of his master Elijah, so the apostles came to see the glory of Jesus. The immediate parallel here to our minds would, of course, be the Resurrection and the Ascension. But, in his Gospel, John makes it clear that by seeing "His glory" [John 1.14], John means the death of Jesus as well.

Jesus speaks of Himself as being "lifted up", an expression borrowed from Joseph's prophecies in prison; although in the double sense - to be lifted up to die, as well as being lifted up to re-instated glory. So, we understand that Jesus was "lifted up" in two ways, by death and also by resurrection. The first 'lifting up' is mirrored by the death of the baker, who met his death in an ignominious, public execution [Genesis 40.16-19]. A fact that Isaiah, in chapter 53, prophesied in respect of the suffering servant. John records that Isaiah "saw his glory" [John 12.41]. The second 'lifting up' is seen in the resurrection of Jesus mirrored in the Pharaoh's cup bearer, who was restored to office in three days [Genesis 40.9-13] which was a restoration to his former glory [John 17.4-5].

[6] Confirming of faith and understanding of task

Elijah's glorification, like Enoch's before him [Genesis 5.24], is that he did not see death but was taken straight into heaven, a clear statement that God regarded him as a godly man who walked with God upon the earth. No wonder Elijah, at his appearing alongside Moses with Jesus at the Transfiguration, was such a confirmation for the apostles, when they saw that such a man was standing with the Master? Then, how even more remarkable for them that the voice from heaven said "this is my Son, hear Him!"

As Elijah went up, separated from Elisha by the chariots of God two things, at least, would have dawned on Elisha: [a] that he was seeing him go, and so his faith would rise that his request would be granted, and [b] that he would have had an understanding of the task granted to him in the way that heaven had sent for his master. The chariots and horsemen of Israel, a symbol of powerful military defence of Israel, came for Elijah. They conveyed to Elisha heaven's understanding of what his master's ministry had been for the kingdom of Israel. So the way his master went was, to the servant left behind, a statement of his master's work. This revelation of what Elijah had been doing, would inform Elisha's own work and made him sure of his authority which he had "in the spirit and power of Elijah".

[7] The reception of the prophetic man's spirit was also the reception of God's power.

As we saw before, Elisha did not ask for the Spirit of God. In the Old Testament record, no

man asked for that. The Spirit simply came, announced or unannounced, as a sovereign work of God. But what he did ask for was the spirit of the man. But his actions afterwards show that he understood that, if he had received the spirit of the man, then he would have access to the God of Elijah. "Where is the God of Elijah?" states such an expectation. The drying up of the waters demonstrates that expectation to be correct as it was honoured from heaven.

The perception Elisha worked with is this: that

"the things [thoughts ASV] of a man are known by the spirit of the man which is in him"

[1 Corinthians 2.11].

It must have been obvious to Elisha, from what he saw of Elijah's life, that he was a man who knew God. Elisha had already demonstrated his willingness to obey God because he served the prophet who served God. Elisha's former obedience to God was expressed in the service he did for Elijah so God already knew his heart.

In asking for the spirit of the man, Elisha knew that he would also come to know the God of his master *like his master had known Him*. In receiving of his master's spirit, Elisha had tapped into the knowledge of God as He was known to Elijah while on earth, and now in heaven. In the same way, Christians understand that they worship "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ". In doing this they comprehend that Jesus Christ is a man who has His God, and all this without ceasing to be God Himself; and so rightly worshipped in His own right.

What was Elijah's knowledge of God? Elijah knew God as One who was:

[a] able to rebuke His people, and especially His king - who ought to govern in His name.

[b] was jealous for His Name and Who detested the Baals and false gods which Jezebel patronised.

[c] quite capable, not only of calling the people to decide between Him and other gods, but he also knew that He did marvellous acts for the deliverance of His people.

Elisha's act of parting the waters of the river echo something he had seen his master do earlier [2 Kings 2.14]. The sons of the prophets, on seeing the result, drew the conclusion saying, "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha" [2 Kings 2.15].

182 - What the Ascension of Jesus and Pentecost meant for disciples

See Acts 1.4-2.32

We have seen something of what it meant for Jesus to be going up into heaven. Now we must ask what His Ascension meant for the disciples themselves. Something had been

worked “for them” in the exaltation of Jesus. What is it that is worked “in them” by the coming of the Spirit?

Luke’s record, in the Acts of the Apostles, connects the Ascension of Jesus and the Day of Pentecost.

In 2 Kings 2 we see two actions of God: the taking of Elijah into heaven and the giving of his spirit to the servant of the taken one. This is very clearly what Luke has in mind in the way that he writes his record of the Ascension and also of the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost. Luke wants us to see the two actions as connected in the same way.

The order in the Acts is:

[1] the clear offer by Jesus of the promise given by his Father of the Spirit [Acts 1.4-5].

[2] Jesus is taken up, and they see Him go, from the Mt of Olives [Acts 1.9-11].

[3] They wait in the upper room in obedience to Jesus’ command.

[4] The day of Pentecost comes.

[5] Peter interprets it as the pouring forth of God’s Spirit on all mankind, in fulfilment of [Joel 2.28-32].

[6] Peter, as an apostle, preaches the humiliation and exaltation of Jesus, with the confidence and boldness which is similar to the attitude of Elisha after he returns from seeing Elijah taken up and knows that he has received of his spirit.

According to John, Jesus re-appears in the room and breaths on them. The theme associated with this is that of sins forgiven [John 20. 15-23]. We have made mention of this different treatment of the Ascension in John’s Gospel earlier [Boan, [2013], Jesus Exalted DS04, #155].

183 – The disciples receive the Spirit of the Man, Jesus, Who is God.

Read 1 Corinthians 2

Paul was careful, when he first preached in Corinth, to not preach in persuasive words of wisdom, but in weakness [1Corinthians 2.3]. Even so, while Paul was operating in weakness, the preaching showed the power of God.

He then spoke of a hidden wisdom, which the mature understand, but which is not available to the world and its rulers [1Corinthians 2.6]. He said this hidden wisdom - in a mystery - had been revealed by God through the Spirit. In saying this, he drew on a piece of obvious wisdom - the spirit of a man, which is in him, is that which knows the things of the man. So, if you could come to receive the spirit of a man you would know the man. Full knowledge of a person and also what he knows is conveyed by receiving his spirit.

The same principle holds true within the life of the God. It is the Spirit of God who knows the deep things of God. So, any union that is spirit-to-spirit, makes the deep things of the one person accessible to the other person; this communion results in an intimate and penetrating knowing.

Paul's main thrust was that we know the deep things of God because we have received the Spirit of God. This means that we shall come to know the things [thoughts = hidden things] of Christ Who has been graciously given to us by God. That is, the reception of the spirit of God is the reception of the revelation of the things of God. And the preaching is in spiritual words, which are taught by the Spirit.

Consistent with this, Paul said, is a discernment that accompanies the spiritual man. What he has come to "have" is the mind of Christ [1 Corinthians 2.16]. What the apostles received when they received the Spirit was the knowledge of God that was experienced by the glorified Son of God, the man Christ Jesus.

3 - He who "has the Son" has "the life".

184 – No gifts apart from the Giver.

Read Genesis 3; Luke 15; Boan, [2009]The Beginning, 29-31

Just as the Father has His life in relation to His Son, by the Spirit; so we do not "have" God's life apart from "having" Christ. To understand this we need to comprehend a major mistake which entered our thinking from the very first temptation of Adam and Eve when Satan offered to Eve God's gifts as "things" she could "have" apart from God.

Adam and Eve had known God as the One Who created them and provided for them. In this knowledge, they always had their knowing of God as based in the things He had given them in tandem with an accompanying word as to how to use them. In this way, they conveyed the benefit He had in mind for them. That is, they never separated the garden, the trees, one another, or the animals from a knowledge of God as Creator and Provider. To know Him that way was an experience rooted in God's Word and the things provided.

What the snake offered to the woman in the temptation was to have the "things" of God as something "separated" from God Himself. The snake essentially led the woman to "take" for herself the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The tree with its fruit was provided by God. But that its fruit was not to be eaten is conveyed in the word of God to them. That is, God was requiring that their "eating" of this tree was governed by his word; which in this particular case was that they shall "not eat"; just as it was for the other, former trees that they "may eat". In this way, what they primarily "have" is relation with God, and their dealing

with “things” is set within that relation.

This temptation, and the subsequent fall of the man and the woman in yielding to it, changed their knowledge. They showed that they had eaten of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because, by their disobedience, they began a way of life that separated the “things of God” from “God”. And to live that way was to accept a lie of the devil.

In the parable of the waiting father, the younger son is preoccupied with the things of his father - that he wanted his share of the father’s estate [Luke 15]. When given them by his father, he left. That is, he left his shared life with the father and went off into a far country to squander his living. For, wherever men and women use their gifts and talents without relation to the Father and his Word, it is rightly said that they “squander” it with “loose” living. The gift is squandered because it is used it out of relation to its meaning - used without considering the word of God about His purpose as to why it was given. The life is “loose” because it is disconnected from the relation in which it has its proper place where the gifts of life can only effectively convey the riches of a relationship.

185 - The Redeemer saves us and in Himself He conveys life to us

In being redeemed we must not think of salvation as “things” which Christ has “done” for us or as benefits He gives us apart from Himself. This would be an attempt to separate his “acts” from Himself. It is to think in a way that separates what He does from Who He is: his Act from his Being. If we do this, we shall think of salvation in a way that divorces the experience of salvation from the Person Who is the Saviour.

There are serious results from wanting Christ’s “benefits” rather than “Christ”. To do this is to split apart what must be held together. This mistake leads to lack of intimacy, in the situation where intimacy with God is the very meaning of our salvation. The only benefits of being saved/redeemed/known Christ are those that inhere in [come with] his Person.

This attitude leads to us valuing freedom “from” in our salvation much more than the freedom “to”. In thinking this way we are concentrating on the past matters of salvation instead of the reasons for which God saved us. Consequently, we will lack joy and excitement in knowing God. Our love grows cold and our experience of God will become dry.

Our faith is to be concentrated upon a person; this the only place where trust, if it is to be exercised, can be placed. If we think with Adam and Eve’s fallen knowledge, we can come to trust doctrines. This means that we trust formulations and ideas about God, rather than God Himself. Consequently, our “faith” which is seen as a creed, becomes an intellectually grasped and maintained position. In this way we cease to trust God. We can be drawn into our own grasp of what this faith means. We begin to trust ourselves to hold on to God, rather than putting our trust in the God who holds on to us.

186 - The rich man's steward – all you "have" is people

Luke 16.1-13

Jesus told a parable of a rich master who found that the steward whom he had placed in charge was squandering his goods. He called him to account and, as a result, the steward lost the stewardship of the master's goods.

The steward understood that he was losing the control of things, so, he plotted that when he was removed from the job, he would be received into the homes of his master's debtors. That is, he used his position as steward to lay down a basis for making himself acceptable with the persons who owed his master. He began to use his waning control over his master's goods by writing a reduction in their bill, while he still had opportunity.

In the parable, the master praised him for this shrewd action. Jesus went on to apply it. He said that the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light.

What the steward discerned was that his master had a quarrel with him about his personal use of his master's goods. The quarrel turned on the understanding that the goods must not be used by a steward without reference to the master. That is, when he appropriated goods for himself, he had relationally excluded his master from the relationship. He had separated the life of the Master from His goods. This state of affairs would exactly mirror what the snake asked of Eve – 'take God's gifts for yourself and use them without reference to the relation between Him and you'. This is true of all men and women - they are, at the day of account, relieved of their stewardship of goods. The issue will be that they have handled God's goods in a way that excluded Him from their life and use of His gifts.

Yet, the steward had some time left, as do we in the days of grace. And the shrewd thing he did was that, conscious of his master foreclosing on him, he made relationships by use of goods. Having failed in this matter with his master, he understood that he could use the goods to make lasting relationships with his own kind. He had shrewdly driven a wonderful bargain - used things as a way to relationships. He had reversed his own error. He had traded something which was not his for something which is "true riches" [Luke 16.11]; relationships which he can truly possess as his "own" [Luke 16.12].

Jesus applies this with power - He says that where a person, thinking in this dualistic way, has separated God from his gifts, then what is left is a clear either-or choice in regard to God or things, God or money [mammon]. Because you have made the split between them, you will hate the one and love the other, or you serve one but not the other - it is a mutually exclusive thing.

Things, He wants us to understand, will, of themselves, fail [Luke 16.9]. They will fail for they are "mammon of unrighteousness". They are unrighteous because they are used out of relation to the Giver. And because they will fail, you should live so as to have relationships that

are heavenly and guarantee you are received there.

In this way, he wants the sons of light to know what to value - it is not the gift, but the Giver. They must be "sons" who know what is their own, and what are their true riches - it is the Giver, it is God Himself. We can have this relation with God the Father because we are made in His image, and our dear Brother, His Son, has taken flesh and we are of His kind - in a way that things are not. It is God in Christ that we alone can "have" eternally; we must accept that we simply cannot "have" things. To think so and live on it is to find that they fail.

"I have a fear, Alister, that you are in danger of avarice,"
said Ian, after a pause.

"Avarice, Ian! What can you mean?"

"You are as free, Alister, from the love of money, as any man I ever knew, but that is not enough. Did you ever think of the origin of the word avarice?"

"No."

It comes - at least it seems to me to come - from the same root as the verb have. It is the desire to call things ours - the desire of company which is not of our kind - company such as, if small enough, you put in your pocket and carry about with you. We call the holding in the hand, or the house, or the pocket, or the power, having; but things so held cannot really be had; having is but an illusion in regard to things. It is only what we can be with that we really possess - that is, what is of our kind, from God to the lowest animal partaking of humanity. A love can never be lost; it is a possession; but who can take his diamond ring into somewhere beyond? - it is not a possession. God can be ours perfectly; nothing can be called property can be ours at all." (Macdonald, [1886], *What's Mine is Mine* page 242.

187 - God's greatest gift to us is a Person - who is Jesus, His Son.

Read 1 John 5.11-12; Romans 8.35-39; 1 Corinthians 1.30-31; Hebrews 9.14

God's great and powerful solution that rescues people who are interested in the gifts of God, and not God Himself, is to give them a gift. For, like any true father, God is able to give good

gifts to His children. But the amazing thing is that the restoring of relationship is found in the fact that the gift which God gives us is a Person. He makes us a gift of His Son - who has nothing to give us but Himself, which is to say a relationship with Himself - a life with Himself. If He shares this with us, we have the life He has. This is the same thing as "having" Jesus.

"And the witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son, has the life: he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life" 1 John 5.11-12 ASV

Notice that we are now in a place to understand this "having" of Jesus. It does not mean that we have Him as a possession that we steward and use; that would be to import the old, fallen knowledge into our relationship with Him again. We do not "have" Him in our pocket, or in our house, as if He is our personal property.

Rather, in "having" Jesus we have a relationship that is permanent from which nothing in heaven or earth will ever separate us.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or the sword?...For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8.35-39 ASV

The person you cannot be separated from is yours, your very own. And because He is faithful, and cannot deny Himself, He will stay that way. It is for this reason that the New Testament in describing the salvation we have in Christ sees Christ as Someone who has

"become to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, that, just as it is written, "Let Him who boasts, boast in the Lord" [1 Corinthians 1.30-31; Jeremiah 9.23-24].

Notice that we are not to think of having wisdom, righteousness, sanctification or redemption in the sense of having taken possession of a thing, or a quality or a talent. We are to think of ourselves as having Him, and if we are in Him by union, He has become our entry and our experience into the wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption found in His Person. These are matters of our experience by virtue of a shared life with Him. The source of these matters for us is his Person.

The same thing is true of His death.

"And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world"...In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." [1 John 2.1-2; 4.10].

These texts do not want us to think of a propitiation made by Jesus as if it is something which is not Himself. They expressly state that He is the propitiation for our sins. Whatever He did He did by putting Himself on the line. The writer to the Hebrews expressly makes it clear that He offered Himself

"...how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" [Hebrews 9.14].

188 – As a father provides for his children, so God gives us His Spirit

See John 14.16,26; Luke 11.13

It was the Spirit who empowered and informed Jesus' life from his birth to his death. Before He ascended He made clear that He would ask the Father and the Father would send the promised Spirit.

We have the clear teaching of Jesus that the heart of the Father is a good heart. And just as all fathers know how to give good gifts to their children, so the Father has the gift of the Holy Spirit for those that ask Him [Luke 11.13]. This is a stunning piece of teaching.

Jesus, having taught them to pray to the Father, illustrates the nature of his fatherhood. Just as ordinary fathers do not give snakes when asked for fish, or scorpions when asked for an egg,

"...how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him" [Luke 11.13].

But it is through the Son that we can come to know the Father. What we learn from Jesus' teaching in John is that it is He, Who knows God as Father, asks the Father to send the Spirit for us. He says this while telling us that the coming of the Spirit is already a promise of the Father. This makes sense for the Son would not ask for the Spirit if He had not been promised by the Father beforehand.

189 - God shares His life, what He "has" as His "Riches", with us

What we have seen above about "having" a person is of course the same for the Father and the Son - they, in Their Persons are the riches which each of them "has". Just as we saw that the glory of God was moral - it was His Character [Exodus 33.13,18-23; 34.5-9], so we are not surprised about the way the New Testament speaks of God's riches as His Character - the expression of His Person.

Paul warns the Jewish folks that they must

"not think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience" [Romans 2.4 ASV].

When God saves us Paul can speak of Him as showing the

"riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy" [Romans 9.23 ASV].

The salvation that has come to the Gentiles is described as

"riches for the world" [Romans 11.11-12 ASV].

When Paul thinks of the way God has worked salvation for Jew and Gentile he says,

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God!" [Romans 11.33 ASV].

These "riches" are really the revelation of the character of God through what He has done for us in Christ Jesus. To increase in the "knowledge" of them is to grow in our experience of the deepening fellowship we have with God Himself through Christ, by the Spirit.

Our "redemption" is according to the "riches of His grace" [Ephesians 1.7, 2.7 ASV] and Paul wants the Ephesians to come to a deeper knowledge of the hope of their calling. This he described as knowing the "riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" [Ephesians 1.18, 3.16, Philippians 4.19 ASV]. In other words, the inheritance God has for us is all the riches which He shares in the life of His Son by the Spirit. What riches the Father and the Son can be said to "have" are the riches which we shall have as our own possession.

Paul rejoices to preach to the Gentiles the:

"unfathomable riches of Christ" [Ephesians 3.8 ASV]

190 - We have a relationship, communion with the Father and His Son.

1 John 1.2-4

"that all who believe in Him might not perish but have eternal life" John 3.16 ASV

We see here from the Gospel passage that eternal life is spoken of as a life that we "have". The understanding of "have" will be along the lines we have been thinking so far.

"and the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us - what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write, so that our joy may be complete"

1 John 1.2-4 ASV

[a] The passage from the letter of 1 John makes clear that what the apostles proclaimed was "the life". It is a life which was "with the Father" and "manifested" to them. That it was made manifest in and through the historical Person of Jesus, the Word of life, is made clear by 1 John 1.1. It was a life which they heard speak, saw what He acted out and they came to behold Who He was, and their hands had handled Him.

[b] They are writing, they say, so that the recipients of the letter may "have" fellowship [common life] with them. The life they have is, in their words, "fellowship with the Father and His Son". What they are saying is that they, who send the letter, have fellowship with the

Father and the Son. And what they desire for the receivers of their letter is to be "having fellowship with us", which is to share the life of God as well. They are going to have their "joy complete" as the recipients of the letter share the life of God as they do.

[c] The letter goes on to encourage them that they do "know" Him, and that is clear because they obey Him [1 John 2.3-6] and they do "know the truth" [1 John 2.21]. They need this encouragement because there are those who have "gone out from them" [1 John 2.18-19] and who, by through their teaching [1 John 1.6-10; 2.22-23; 4.3,5,6,21] before they left, had sought to "deceive them" [1 John 2.26].

These folks did not have the life for they "hated the brethren" [1 John 2.9; 3.10,15], did not care for those in need [1 John 3.17] and lived under constant fear of punishment from God [1 John 4.17-18] with no security about the day of judgement.

191 - Knowing true riches we can steward - properly handle - "things".

"Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all good things to enjoy. Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed." [1 Timothy 6.17-19 ASV]

When the true life is working in God's children, then they have "things" in their right place. They see them as things arising out of their relationship with the Father, who gives them to them to enjoy. They see what they steward of God's possessions as things to generously share with others. And as they do this they are more and more taking hold of what is the true life.

4 - At His Resurrection Christ became a life-giving Spirit

192 - Two ages - "in the flesh" and "in the Spirit"

Boan, [2013] Jesus Exalted, #145-153

We have seen that Paul thought that the resurrection of Christ was a centre point in the history of all mankind. It was the place where a temporary, transitional, impermanent period of the "flesh" passed over into the permanent, final period of the "Spirit". These two ages, or periods of time were centred about two federal [head] men, Adam and Christ. We saw in our study of 1 Corinthians 15 that Paul arranges his thinking about the Christian life according to these two periods.

There is a coming together of the ministry of the Holy Spirit and Christ for us, this is estab-

lished through the resurrection of Christ. We shall also see that there is a present resurrection experience for us - it is of the new life. We have a share in the life of Christ; we participate in that life by faith.

193 – The Holy Spirit and Christ are not to be separated in function

Read 2 Corinthians 3.1-4.6 ; Boan, [2013], Jesus Exalted #147,151

In 2 Corinthians 3.1-4.6 Paul is dealing with attacks made upon his apostleship. Some opponents had spoken concerning his weakness to the Corinthians. Paul says that the Corinthian disciples are a testimony to his true apostolic work, simply by their very existence as a church planted in that city. We need to follow through some of the argument of the section to see how Paul thinks about the Holy Spirit and Christ.

[1] He points out that he does not need "letters of commendation" from other people to validate his ministry [2 Corinthians 3.1]

[2] He thinks of the Corinthians as an open letter from Christ. This letter speaks of the Corinthians as cared for by Paul and his team ["us"]; this care is the sign of their authority there. He understands this open letter is not penned on tablets with ink, but on human [fleshly] hearts by the action of the Spirit of the living God.

We might expect ink to be written on parchment or vellum, but Paul speaks of stone tablets here, because he has in mind the Mosaic law of which he will say more later. His opponents were, most likely, those who wanted to take the Corinthians back to a Judaistic, legal way of life.

He says that the apostolic team have this confidence before God about their authority through Christ. Further, even though they are weak in themselves, God has made them adequate as servants of the new covenant to the Corinthians [2 Corinthians 3.2-6].

[3] In 2 Corinthians 3.3 Paul has referred to the Corinthians as a letter "of Christ" and yet the letter is written "with [by] the Spirit of the living God". Here we have Christ and the Spirit joining together in their redemptive work for the Corinthians. This refusal to separate, in the experience of the Corinthians, the work of the Spirit and the work of Christ we have already explored under the idea of the "last Adam became a life-giving Spirit" [Boan, [2013], Jesus Exalted #147,151]. As we go forward in this present passage, we shall see that this identity in the functioning of the Spirit and the resurrected Christ is made clearer.

194 - The contrasting glory of two ministries and two covenants

2 Corinthians 3.1-4.6

In 2 Corinthians 3.6 Paul begins to expand what he has said [2 Corinthians 3.3] about the

Spirit. He now contrasts two ministries, each of which is to be identified with two covenants. He says that the apostles are servants of the new covenant; it is not a covenant of the "letter" [law] but a covenant of the Spirit.

The ministry of death, which is of the letter engraved on tablets of stone is a ministry which kills. The reference to Moses makes it clear he means the old covenant enacted on Mt Sinai. It is marked by impermanence for it has a fading glory. This ministry was one of law revealing sin, and so of condemnation [2 Corinthians 3.6-9].

The ministry of life, which is the new covenant, comes by the Spirit who gives life [2 Corinthians 3.6], and it has a surpassing glory, for it is a ministry of righteousness and is permanent: it has a glory that remains.

Paul contrasts Moses' ministry with the Spirit's ministry. It is a contrast of agents, Moses is the agent of the old covenant to people, the Spirit is the agent of the new covenant to people.

Now in 2 Corinthians 3.12-13 Paul speaks of the apostles as being very bold in their speech because, unlike Moses, who veiled his face to hide the fading nature of the glory, the apostles are ministers of a permanently glorious covenant.

The Jewish people, in rejecting Christ, have their minds hardened, because they read Moses unaware that his glory was impermanent. Now Paul switches to contrast Christ and Moses. For he indicates that when a man turns to the Lord [and by "Lord" he means Christ 2 Corinthians 4.5] the veil is taken off his heart, and he sees the permanence of the new, glorious covenant. This means that he understands the impermanence of the glory of the Mosaic covenant [Jeremiah 31.31-34]. The deception that accompanied the veil is taken away.

195 – The Spirit and Christ are not separated in our experience

2 Corinthians 3.1-4.6

[1] *The Lord is the Spirit*

In 2 Corinthians 3.17-18, Paul makes clear how he can so easily move between these contrasts of Moses and the Spirit, and then Moses and Christ. Paul states three things:

[a] "the Lord is the Spirit". And then he says where

[b] "the Spirit of the Lord" is,

[c] there is liberty. [See Galatians 2.4, 4.9,31, 5.1-2]

[a] He makes a direct identification between the risen Christ and the Spirit, which is what we have found already clearly stated in the passage 1 Corinthians 15.45. But we notice that the identification is set within the experience of liberty for the Corinthians [and all Christians]. This setting would suggest to us that the identification [Christ = the Spirit] can only be rightly understood as a statement about their function, not their being. It is an identification

brought out here in the context of their one “ministry” as contrasted to the ministry of Moses.

As to their identity we can say that the Holy Spirit is not Christ, nor is Christ the Holy Spirit, they are separate Persons within the Godhead and are not to be confused.

In stating that the Lord Christ is the Spirit is not a statement of their identity and being. Rather, it is making it clear that, after the resurrection of Christ, differences in their functioning cannot be distinguished and this will certainly be the case in our experience.

Statement [b] above also makes it clear that the first, [a], is not to be taken as a statement of being, because it immediately speaks of the “Spirit of the Lord” thus separating them. Taken together, [a] and [b] make the following two points carefully. They are referring to the identity of the function of the Spirit and the risen Lord. They are not referring to their separate identities as separate Persons in the Trinity.

[2] After the Resurrection, the ministry of Christ and the Holy Spirit function as one ministry.

At his resurrection, the incarnate Lord Christ became a life-giving Spirit [1 Corinthians 15.45]. After the resurrection, as to their work of bringing us the reality of redemption, the Lord Christ is as the Spirit - their ministry is indistinguishable to us. This is because we are in union with Christ, which is the same as being “one spirit” [1 Corinthians 6.17] with Him. Such a union means that we could not practically separate them in our experience. So we often say to one another, “the Spirit is making clear to me”, just as easily as we might say, “the Lord has shown me”.

However, in the light of the historic revelation brought to us from the Father through the Son, we can and must think of the functions of the Spirit and Christ as separate, for they are so. But in the internally experienced union we now have the registration of the voice of the Lord and the prompting of the Spirit are indistinguishable.

[3] Paul speaks of all Christians as having an unveiled face; that is, boldly affirming the permanent glory of the new covenant.

Christians are seeing an image, as in a mirror; it is the glory of the Lord. That is, when they look at themselves they see the glory of the Lord since they are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory [1 Corinthians 15.49, 2 Corinthians 4.4]. This, says Paul, is “just as from the Lord, the Spirit” which speaks of this identity of the functioning we have been discussing.

[4] We are being changed now, participating in the resurrection power

Paul will go on to say how we have this participation in Christ’s glory when we are being transformed to be like the resurrected Christ which he has mentioned in 2 Corinthians 3.18 and 4.6 as a “treasure” in an earthen vessel. This setting for the glory makes it clear that the surpassing greatness of the power may be “of God” and not “of ourselves”. So, the source of the power is God and not us. And, here is a wonder! We are carrying the wonderful treasure

of the increasing glory of Christ in a vessel – an unredeemed body. This incongruous mixture serves to make clear that the power is God's not ours, and it is His work that godly lives could appear even in tandem with such broken and humble vessels.

[5] True apostles are attended by weakness and a power that is not their own

All this, of course, makes it clear to the Corinthians, that the false apostles, in their opposition to Paul, are wanting to be 'power people'. In wanting to look like they are the source of their own power, and wanting Paul to be an impressive man like they think of themselves - they have got it all wrong! They are simply working in the flesh [2 Corinthians 5.12, 10.1-2, 10-18, 11.20, 12.10-13], declaring themselves to be of the old era. They show in their life style that they have no personal knowledge of the new age.

True apostles, living consistent with Christ's example, will be carrying around in their body the death of Jesus. They are men who are clearly acquainted with their own weakness, shame and suffering. They are marked by deep dependency on God. Like Christ, they shall be attended with the power of God in a way that, because being weak in themselves, such weakness simply serves to clearly show that it is all God's power, and none of their own.

5 - Word and Spirit: historic, authorised witnesses, empowered to speak

196 - Historical witnesses from John's Baptism to the Ascension.

Read Acts 1

Luke records Jesus stating that the apostles will receive power to speak the Word of God when the Spirit comes upon them. They are to be "witnesses"- they will speak of the things they know and can bear testimony about.

When the apostles met to replace the loss of Judas, they had particular requirements of the person suitable to be chosen. There must be a witness born by someone who was qualified to bear testimony. The persons who make this witness must be able to make their stand with the historic knowledge of Jesus. The person must

"have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us - beginning with the baptism of John, until the day that He was taken from us - one of these should become a witness with us of His resurrection." [Acts 1.21-22].

The witness needed to know Jesus "in the flesh" for the period of time from Jesus' Baptism by John to the Ascension. This is because the historic element for the primary apostolic witness concerns not just an internal confidence derived from knowledge of the Spirit but also an

objective testimony to what they have seen and handled. It is not their faith that they are simply speaking from, but the factual, historic deeds about which they can testify that they have actually seen.

This sharing in the 'history of Jesus' has to do with a sensual revelation of the risen Lord - it was available to their eyes and senses and thought of with their mind. It is to be distinguished - and yet integrated - with the receiving of the Spirit of the ascended Lord.

197 - The coming of the Spirit is the authorising empowerment to speak

[1] Jesus has set the task for which Pentecost empowers the apostles.

They shall be His "witnesses" [Acts 1.8]. The power that came by the Spirit was the power to speak which is clearly shown by what happened to them, and what they did as a result. The apostles would be testifying to their knowledge of Jesus, both historically and personally.

At Pentecost the Spirit communicated through them the only matter the Spirit of Christ could - what was contained in the life of Jesus, the glorified Son of God. This communication was their authorisation to speak of His glorified life according to the measure they had received. Historically speaking, it was from John Baptist to the Ascension; that was the measure required. Personally speaking, the authorisation and power to speak came from a receiving of the Spirit of Christ. These two elements make up the unique, apostolic witness.

The coming of the Spirit was not a matter of asking "have we got some clear empowerment to do signs and wonders?" This was not in the hands of the apostles. In the Acts, signs and wonders accompanied their preaching, but they were the sovereign work of God. Signs "followed" them [Mark 16.15-18] and took place through the Name of Jesus [Acts 4.30]. What they had was the authority to speak "in the Name" of Jesus and when they did it gave health [Acts 3.6,16].

The coming of the Spirit generated a different question in the apostolic men - it was "Are we authorised to testify to the glorified Jesus according to apostolic measure?" What they were authorised to speak was the issue - and that had to do with the revelation they had received about the ascended Lord.

[2] The Ascension is one thing, the coming of the Spirit another.

Elijah's ascent and Elisha's reception of his spirit were two distinct actions of God. So it is with us. The resurrection and ascension of the Lord established the objective authority over heaven and earth. Being a one time event, if the Ascension of Jesus was the basis for the authorisation to speak, then the witness of Jesus would have died out with the death of those who had witnessed it. If conformity to the apostolic witness is related to seeing the visible risen Lord ascend, then it cannot continue.

But if the work of the apostle relates to the revelation of the glory of the ascended Lord by the Spirit, then it may continue in every generation. Paul would be an example. He was, in his own words, “untimely born” [1 Corinthians 15] as to historic witness - but nevertheless an apostle to whom the Lord had appeared. He had “seen” the Lord, after the Spirit.

[3] The fullness of the Spirit.

What we may ask of God then is not for the power of the Spirit so much as the revelation of the fullness of Christ, who is glorified and ascended. If we received that, then we would have received the fullness of the Spirit. For the Spirit has no fullness of Himself to communicate except the fullness of the revelation of Jesus Christ. That is the content of what is the fullness of the Spirit. Significantly, in Luke’s way of saying things, when someone is spoken of as “full of the Holy Spirit” they usually get up and speak.

198 - The power of the spoken Word of God comes with its fire.

Read Matthew 3.7-12; 10.1-15; Acts 2.3-4; 2 Corinthians 2.14-15

What came upon those in the room, waiting in obedience to Jesus, was the wind - an Old Testament picture, of the breath of God coming with mighty power. It was sudden and strong and filled the whole house.

Then came tongues of fire resting upon each one of them. When John the Baptist described his baptism in water in contrast to the baptism Jesus would bring, he described Jesus baptism as being “with Holy Spirit and fire” [Matthew 3.7-12]. He applied the fire to the “Pharisees and the Sadducees” in the setting of the wrath to come. This wrath, symbolised as fire, John associated with the presence of Jesus as the One with his winnowing fork in His hand and already axing trees considered no longer alive, but already dead.

We have seen that the salvation which God brings is always a salvation through judgment [Boan, [2013], Atoning Death #114120-121]. The message the apostles preached was fire to those who did not receive it. They were preaching a gracious message of salvation, yet it was, in its content, a revelation of the glory of the ascended Lord who governs the world and is its Judge.

The apostles had walked this road before in Israel. When they were sent out by Jesus to the towns of Israel, they were to preach and heal and raise the dead and then, they were to note how they were received. If received well, then their peace would remain there - if not, then they were to reject that town. This was demonstrated by shaking the dust of that town off their feet, they were refusing to take anything of it with them. Its sins were retained. Jesus said that it would be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than that town in the day of judgment [Matthew 10.1-15].

After the resurrection and ascension, the mission is to the whole world. All authority has

been given Jesus in heaven and earth - whenever the fire of judgment rests on his witnesses' words the Spirit of the Son is communicating His heavenly judging power. The judgment of the world which took place in the death of Jesus is found presenting itself to every individual as they hear the gracious gospel of the risen, exalted, authoritative Son of God.

The tongues of fire associated with their persons as preachers, do not state wrath as something arising from their own authority. They simply preach the gospel, and then they are a sweet aroma of the knowledge of Christ in every place. Among the perishing, however, they are an aroma of death [2 Corinthians 2.14-15].

199 - The Power of the spoken Word of God in its grace.

Acts 2.11-36: Boan, [1976] The Gift, the Fruit and the Gifts

The apostle's subject was the "mighty deeds of God" [Acts 2.11]. This would hardly surprise us, for they were spoken of as "filled with the Spirit" - full with the knowledge of Jesus Christ by the Spirit. They were heard by the hearers to be speaking other human languages. The devout Jews of the dispersion, who spoke these native languages heard them and, of course, understood them.

The coming down from heaven by God which took place when the tower of Babel was being built, was a judgment of God. It halted that arrogant desire of the people to search out God and find Him for themselves, to storm Him and make Him deal with them. God halted that work by fracturing their communication with one another; He confounded their languages. He did this lest they, in their self-based communication, should build their tower to heaven. To reach for God in their own strength and image was thwarted by Him.

God's own reaching out to the world, with His gracious message now enacts the reverse at Pentecost, as it does in our own time. True international communication is consistent with a new humanity, who have been created by God as witnesses to His Son.

The hearers asked, "what does this mean?" The question either asks 'what does this speaking and hearing of our own language mean?' - referring to the miraculous communication, or it asked, 'what does this speaking of the mighty deeds of God mean?' - referring to the content.

Peter answered the question "What does this whole event mean?" He told them that this day of Pentecost fulfilled the prophecy of Joel. It was a pouring forth of God's Spirit on all mankind; it was the beginning of the day of the Lord; and it was a time to call on God and be saved.

He then preached of the historic work of Jesus - his death, resurrection and ascension and testified to his own knowledge of the glory of Jesus in His exaltation. He powerfully identified Jesus, the crucified, with the One God has made both Lord and Christ [2.36].

Powerful conviction followed. The hearers, dreadfully disturbed by the Spirit about their recent rejection and killing of the Messiah sent to them by God, asked what should they do. Peter, having seen this convicting work of the Spirit shown in them, advised that they were to repent, and they were to be baptised in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins, and then what would follow was that they would receive the gift of the Spirit, Who is now available to all mankind.

Notice that what Peter spoke of was the gift of the Spirit Himself; not some gift which the Spirit would give [as is spoken of in 1 Corinthians 12-14]. These latter gifts of the Spirit serve a different function. The gift of the Spirit Himself is the gift of the knowledge of the revelation of the ascended, glorified and exalted Lord Jesus.

200 - Eschatological fulfilment – "...this is that..."

Read Numbers 11.26-30; Joel 2.28-32; Acts 2.14-21; 1 Peter 1.20

To those gathered in Jerusalem that day of Pentecost Peter answered the question asked by the hearers seeking the meaning of the event. In his speech [Acts 2.14-21] he speaks of the event they have just witnessed as the fulfilment of the Joel prophecy [Joel 2.28-32]. He makes reference of the "last days" [Acts] as referring to what the prophet Joel prophesied; "after this" [Joel] see also Isaiah 2.2, Micah 4.1. He asserts that Christ has been manifested at the "end of times" [1 Peter 1.20].

The apostles did not stop short at the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus; they went on to another event, the great day of the Lord. Their later preaching exemplifies this theme. They spoke of: [i] Jesus coming to judge the living and the dead [Acts 10.42] [ii] a day appointed when God will judge the world in righteousness by a man he has appointed" [Acts 17.31]; [iii] the second coming of Christ is the final and complete manifestation of the kingdom [Phil 2.10ff]

So the apostles saw themselves as "those upon whom the end of the ages had come" [1 Corinthians 10.11]. The time of the end had only begun; they awaited the final event. While the future had begun, it was not yet consummated.

So this eschatology - the setting of where we are in this present, but last age - conditioned the life of the early believers in every way. For them, Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom was seen as present reality [2 Corinthians 5.17 "new"]. The resurrection of Christ [2 Corinthians 5.14-15] and the gift of the promised Spirit altered the church's perspective. For not only had the future been set in motion; the implication was that the present age is passing away [1 Corinthians 7.31]. That such an immanent judgment was to appear even had implications for the Christian's use of pagan law courts [1 Corinthians 6.1-4]. They spoke of themselves as expatriates, aliens living in a foreign outpost as citizens of heaven [Philippians 3.20].

201 – First an experience of Jesus, then comes his meaning in history.

Read Luke 24.36-49; 2 Corinthians 1.18-22

Before His going, Jesus prepared the disciples to understand what they had seen lived out before them in being his disciples. He wanted them to know, so far as He could disclose it, the whole plan of God. The end of Luke's first volume records Jesus explaining where the suffering of Jesus was to be found in the Old Testament [Luke 24.36-49]. Luke describes what Jesus did was an "opening of their minds so they could understand the Scriptures."

We notice that the explanation takes place after the death and resurrection of Jesus. It confirms what Jesus began to do and teach. "Fulfilment" of prophecy is something they could not predict. As a prior word it was always clear but its fulfillment makes everything about it transparent. Prophecy in Old Testament is given to us that we may, by the Spirit, recognise it, not so much predict it. We recognise it as fulfilled at the moment of time it comes to pass.

The Scriptures are an explanation of Jesus Himself – "things written about me". Jesus' explanations made clear how the actions of which the disciples have been part, integrate into the work of the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms. Paul can speak of how all the promises of God are "yes" in Jesus [2 Corinthians 1.18-22].

This unfolding of the past prophecies is mirrored in our progressive experience of persons. First we meet them, engage them, and then, out of an on going relational exchange, we begin to understand them. The experience precedes and lays the basis for the understanding. Similarly, we first experience God before we come to understand Him. When we first encounter the Word of God it leads to an experience; then later we come into an understanding.

The first encounter is the work of the Spirit by agency of the evangelist; its fruit is an experience. The second is the Spirit's work by agency of the teacher, who can only teach people about the One they already know; its fruit is understanding.

202 – First, experience of the Spirit, then understanding of Scriptures.

Following Pentecost, the Acts of the Apostles, Luke's second volume, gradually unfolds the way the Spirit directs the church. The Spirit lead people to take initiatives which gave rise to new situations. These situations forced them to ask of the Lord, what were for them, new questions. Then the Spirit gave understanding of the Old Testament text by showing, either that a previous prophecy has come to fulfillment, or a previous principle is now to coming to practical expression. He, the Spirit, was leading them "into all the truth"; truth of life and action which was then fully integrated into the previous revelation of God which had been given beforehand.

Examples of this leading of the Spirit abound. We see it as Peter explains the Pentecost miracle as a fulfilling - "this is that" - of Joel's prophecy Acts 2.16-21. When the man at the temple

gate is healed Peter states that, since this has been done 'in Jesus' Name ' then the God of the Old Testament fathers has glorified his holy child Jesus Acts 3.13. Peter, in defence of them being called before the Sanhedrin council, uses Psalm 2 to show what is happening Acts 4.8-20; [d] Stephen's speech about "resisting the Holy Spirit" as an explanation of the blindness of the current Jewish generation, from which Jews were encouraged to save themselves from this generation Acts 7.

The Spirit led the church in the Samaria, in dealing with the tricky situation of Simon Magus being present at Philip's preaching [Acts 8]. The link between the risen Lord and the Spirit of Christ is seen in the conversion of Saul. It is made clear that for Paul to be found persecuting the Church is to be persecuting Jesus [Acts 9].

The Spirit cause Peter to go with the men from Cornelius' house [Acts 10-11]. In Acts 13 we are told of the need to separate out Barnabas and Saul for the "work" to which "I [the Holy Spirit] have called them" [Acts 13].

"...even though for the experience of the Spirit for the earliest believers followed their experience of Christ, incarnate and risen, their understanding of the Spirit begins with the Old Testament, and it is that understanding which is being transformed by Christ, just as was their understanding of what it meant for the Messiah to be Jesus, not to mention their understanding of God." [Fee, [1994]. footnote 26 p.834,

Constantly, this experience of the leading of the Spirit for the early church brought about an enriched appreciation of the Old Testament. These men, as Jews, began to have an intense course in the re-reading of their ancient Scripture. Similarly, in Paul we see the teaching he brought about the Spirit was to integrate it with the Old Testament and so to speak of the Spirit of God. 2 Tim 3.16; 1 Tim 4.13.

In time, all of this re-education in the meaning of ancient prophecy - now fulfilled - would lead the Church into a long journey of the Trinitarian understanding of the Spirit, and so to the underlying basis of the Godhead's trinitarian Life. This trinitarian understanding was fundamental to considering what we mean when we speak of experiencing the shared life of Jesus.

203 - Holy Spirit, the Commander and Inspirer of the missionary work.

After his resurrection and Ascension, the Lord had promised the Holy Spirit to his disciples. All that followed was a consequence of that promise coming to fruition.

"The Acts of the Apostles is the record of the

fulfilment of a promise made by Christ to His disciples and of the consequences which followed.” Allen, [MoSI 965] p.3.

Consistent with the principle we have seen at the opening of the Acts;

“The Holy Spirit is first given, then all the acts are described as consequences of His descent upon human beings.” Allen, [MoSI 965] p.4.

[1] *The command of Christ and the form it takes under the Spirit.*

Acts opens then with a gracious promise of the reception of power that Christ will send so that they may carry out the command given. Roland Allen understands this ‘command’ was not a matter of simply taking the principles of Christ and living according to them.

“This manner of command is peculiar to the Gospel. Others direct from without, Christ directs from within; others order, Christ inspires; others speak external words, Christ gives the Spirit which desires and strives for that which He commands; others administer a dead letter, Christ imparts life. This is the manner of command in St. Luke’s writings. He speaks not of men who, being what they were, strove to obey the last orders of a beloved Master, but of men who, receiving a Spirit, were driven by that Spirit to act in accordance with the nature of that Spirit.” Allen, [MoSI 965] p.5.

This spiritual unity of which Allen speaks, links the work of the apostles to “all that Jesus began to do and teach” [Acts 1.1]. It also separates the work of the Apostles from the work of John the Baptist. It asserts a contrast between baptism of John and the baptising work of Jesus seen in the Gospels. The work and power of John the Baptist was done in the power of the Holy Spirit [filled with Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb] [Luke 1.15]. There is a sharp distinction between prophets and forerunners of Christ inspired by the Holy Spirit and the apostles and followers of Christ baptised with his Spirit.

204 - *The drive of the Spirit.*

There are accounts of the deeds of prominent men in the early church. But there is a careful selection made. They are not mentioned because of being specially chosen and ordained by Christ to be his apostles. Of most of the apostles we read nothing, and of those we read most about are not apostles in that sense. They are not mentioned because they were leaders of different forms of active life in the church; they were leaders in only one form of activity.

We hear little of: [i] James of Jerusalem, who was without doubt and important leader there;

[ii] of the men who organised the churches in Syria and Asia Minor, Greece and Rome; [iii] of settled bishops, pastors, even though their work is important.

Those we hear about are all missionaries engaged in preaching the Gospel to those outside the Christian Church; Peter, John, Stephen, Philip, Barnabas, John Mark, Silas and Timothy.

What we hear of these men are carefully selected events of their lives. They all have some important bearing on the preaching of the Gospel to those outside the church. [Except Matthias' appointment [Acts 1.15ff], and Ananias and Sapphira [Acts 5.1-11].

If we think of Acts as a book of Christian lives, it is *missionary lives* that we are considering. The Acts is book of church history; but it tells us of the growth of the church, not of its internal history. There is nothing much about the organization of the internal affairs of particular churches; even of Philippi, which Luke knew well. Luke is more concerned with the spreading of the Gospel, how the first converts were won, how they faced persecution and were established, then he passes on. He is concerned with the evangelisation of the world [Acts 2.44-47].

Persecutions are dealt with, but not so much about the detail of the sufferings. Rather, Luke mentions the missionary zeal of the apostles, their deliverances from peril, or they are recorded as occasions that drove them on to wider fields.

The Council of Jerusalem is mentioned four times. It met to: [i] silence the murmurs of the Greeks against the Jews [Acts 6]; [ii] to investigate Peter's going to the Gentiles for there were those who had doubts about that [Acts 11]; [iii] to discuss the admission of the Gentiles [Acts 15] and [iv] to deliberate with Paul, as to how to silence the murmurings of the Jewish Christians against his conducting of missions [Acts 20]. All these are questions concerning the propagating of the Gospel. They are matters, for Luke, of the advance of the Word.

In regards to the Church at Antioch [Acts 11.22ff; 13.1ff] Luke records the first preaching, the conversion of Greeks, the arrival of Barnabas, the search for Saul, the dispute between Jewish and Gentile Christians; but his main concern is for the missionary zeal of the Antiochene church. Luke records how the relations between Jew and Gentile affected the propagation of the Gospel throughout the world. The Spirit given moved these men; then the Spirit impelled the missionary work. He is a missionary Spirit.

205 - The inward motivating power of the Spirit.

With the first gift of tongues, the apostles began at once to address men out of every nation and language, and as the Spirit enabled them to speak they saw that they were understood. He revealed His nature as world wide and all embracing; a Spirit who desired the salvation of all men and women of every nation. His work was the enabling of men to preach to them.

All the addresses are to unbelievers, except Paul to the Ephesian elders and the council at Jerusalem. The addresses are all evangelistic sermons. Peter [Acts 2, 3, 4, 5] tries to bring home the crime of his hearers in crucifying Christ and then indicates that Christ would be exalted and his claim vindicated. He does this not so much trying to bring the condemnation of those who crucified Him, but their salvation [Luke 24.47].

Luke's emphases are clearly in line with the work of the Spirit anticipated by Jesus as recorded in John 16.8-11. The Spirit led them to a profound understanding of the nature and the work of Jesus Christ; which during Christ's lifetime the disciples had failed to grasp. They were now moved by the Spirit, who desired the salvation of men and women. This was their community with the Spirit being expressed. Peter, who once sought leave to call down fire on those who rejected Jesus, found that now he was in a different place [Luke 9.54].

206 - Spirit showed the need to respond to men and women

There was a deep desire for them to be saved, and a sure awareness of the deep needs of human lives. This is shown in the facts of their preaching and the character of it eg. Stephen's righteous indignation. There was always the conclusion to which the preaching leads [Acts 2.3; 3.19; 4.12; 5.31; 10.43].

Repentance was with respect to not having believed on Jesus [See also John 16]. John the Baptist's repentance was negative – a turning from. The apostles now preached a turning from unbelief and a turning to Christ; a turning from all sin, known and unknown.

Baptism was not simply a washing away of sin, it was baptism into Christ. It was about a new spiritual state; and brought men in touch with Jesus Christ. This was a real release. This explains why people who had repented in the sense of John's baptism had to repent again, in a very different way and then be baptised with a baptism which cannot be repeated. They preached the receiving of the Holy Spirit. The baptism of John and the baptism in the Spirit is contrasted.[Acts 19.2-6].

Under the Holy Spirit's impulsion they preached that people are only satisfied in Jesus Christ [Acts 4.12, 13.39, 2.40, 1 Thessalonians 1.10]. Otherwise, men and women are in darkness, under the power of Satan.

207 - The Administration of the Spirit

[1] Setting apart of Christians for special work. Acts 6.6; 13.3;14.23

The gift of the Spirit Himself was necessary for every Christian. The Christians were already men full of the Spirit [Acts 6.3, 9.17, 11.24]. The Old Testament idea of imparting was familiar; what was new was the communication of the Spirit to every member of the body of Christ.

Christians all become kings and priests to God [Revelation 1.6, 1 Peter 2.9]. The Spirit was happy to use, not just the apostles, but each person where and as He found him.

Yet, there are some examples where the laying on of hands by others who are not apostles; see Ananias healing Paul's blindness [Acts 9.17] some where the do lay hands for specific reasons associated with the ministry [2 Tim 1.6, 1 Tim 4.14].

[2] The Spirit is the Source and the test of new Activity

We see that when Peter is called to account for the fact that he ate with Gentiles - an Italian soldier in Cornelius and also those in his house - the retelling of the way the Spirit had guided him was enough to convince the listeners that his eating with Gentiles must be in some sense OK. Then, on the hearing of the Old Testament as in some way foretelling such a matter the people were satisfied [Acts 11.1-18].

[3] The Word of the Spirit through the apostles

To the people of God who had received the Spirit, was brought a revelation of Jesus that took the form of a bearing witness of what they had heard and seen and handled [1 John 1.1]. They taught in the Temple and they instructed the early believers. They were the Spirit's persons for the establishment of the faith of the church on truth and the bedrock of the incarnate Word. The Spirit, through them, demonstrated the powerful godliness of life He engendered and also established the plumbline, the standard, of the authentic witness to Jesus Christ. They had a message of wisdom [1 Cor 2.6] given to them by the Spirit to reveal the mystery of Christ. This was their ministry of teaching, exercised within the Church.

They also spoke of this wisdom of God to the outside world in the preaching of the cross. They spoke publically in Jesus' Name, as they had done previously, under Jesus' commission, to the demons, only this time to men and women. The people of God were led by the Spirit to listen to them and to drink deeply of this precious witness to the incarnate Word that came through the apostles.

The Spirit also used them to order the church life by giving their authority to the leading of the Spirit, as the occasion arose, in the placing of men in the life of the church for the work of administering the life of the body.

[4] The "work"

The Spirit called them to the "work" of propagating the Word of Jesus by journeying [Acts 13.1-4, 14.26-27] to preach in the places to where He led them. In some situations He led them by blocking them; in other places so that they went on to a destination made clear by, dream, by vision, by translating them to a place, by speaking directly to them. He also led them back later to "strengthen" [Acts 18.23] the disciples in each place.

[5] The churches

When an assembly of believers had arisen, then the apostles were the agents of recognising and publically putting in place the persons [Acts 14.23] in whom the Spirit had worked to show they had an eldership and care of the flock. Once these pastors [shepherds] of the flock were recognised and put in place then the assembly is called a “church” by Luke. This oversight [bishops], this governing of the flock [shepherd], was a work of the Spirit [Acts 20.28]

The same Spirit also used the apostles in concert with the elders [Acts 15.4,6,22] and with the whole church, [Acts 16.14] to gather together and convene a council to acknowledge what the Spirit had led them into and to see the consistency with this out of the Scriptures [the Old Testament]. He led them into all the truth, bringing to remembrance the words of the Lord Jesus and also showing the continuing revelation of the fulfilment of the Scriptures.

The word of the Spirit through the teachers [Acts 13.1, teaching and preaching [15.35] arises from the Spirit, who searches the deep things of God and, at the same time, imparting words suitable for expressing spiritual truth. If the product of the word through evangelists is an experience that comes to be publically uttered; the result of the Word of the Spirit through the teachers is an understanding of what it is that God has so freely given to us [1 Corinthians 2.12-14].

The word of the Spirit through the prophets built up and edified [1 Corinthians 14.3, Acts 13.1, 15.22 leading men = prophets 15.32] the church. They spoke for the comfort [strengthening] of the believers, as for example, when they were to face famines and hard times. The believers responded to these warnings by preparing for the provision of the other believers in those places.

The ministries of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher are among the church [Ephesians 4]. They are gifts to men of grace provided by the ascended Christ [Eph 4.7-8] for his church to come to the fullness He desires. They are all word ministries, and they prepare the people of God for works of service [Ephesians 4.12]; they build up the body of Christ to maturity. It is a maturity expressing itself as a unity in the faith and unity in the knowledge of the Son of God. It leads to attaining to the full measure of Christ [Ephesians 4.13]. This is to grow up into the Head, speaking the truth and being built up in love [Ephesians 4.15]. Without these the church will be tossed back and forth, the victims of every wind of teaching and deceitful schemes of men.

[6] The Believers

Those who came to put their trust in Christ were called by various names. They were said to be those who were belonging to the Way [Acts 9.2, 19.9,23]. This word “way” pictures the exodus and the way to Jerusalem the disciples of Christ followed with Him. We see that in Mark’s Gospel; so it had the double picture of the ancient march from deliverance into the life with God that leads to where He is taking us. They “way” was also the Jewish name for the Christians, who, at this time, the Jews viewed as a Jewish sect [24.14,22].

Other names were attributed to them as they were seen as those who call upon God's Name [Acts 9.14]; the disciples [Acts 9.26,14.21]; saints, which stressed their holy status and life [Acts 9.32]. They referred to each other collectively with the family sense of being "the brethren" [Acts 11.1]; in the context of a local assembly they saw themselves as those who belonged to the church [Acts 12.1].

[7] The church

Throughout Acts, Luke also uses the word "church" to speak of the whole of the people of God who are gathered under the care of Jesus' government through his Spirit. This "church" is seen to be increasing throughout Judea, Samaria and Galilee [Acts 9.31]. The church can be said to enjoy peace, being built up, and live in the fear of the Lord and comfort of Holy Spirit, as it was strengthened by the apostles [Acts 18.23].

[8] Baptism

Baptism into John's baptism was not enough. People can be instructed accurately, and speak that out but still are not baptised or believing in Jesus. We have the examples of Apollos and the disciples in Ephesus [Acts 18.24-19.7].

Baptism in water is done in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins [Acts 2.38]. It is expected to be followed by the receiving of the Holy Spirit. It was a cleansing act in regard to defilement as well, they thought of it as done to "wash away your sins, calling on His name" [Acts 22.16].

[9] Leading of Spirit

Throughout the Acts, the Holy Spirit is able to make known to an individual what it is that He wants him to know. This is done in a variety of ways. It may be a **vision**, as the vision of Peter clarified at the arrival of the men from Cornelius [Acts 10.17-20; Acts 16.9-10; Acts 18.9-10]. It can be through **remembering something** that Jesus had said, where they remembered the word of the Lord [Acts 11.16]. It may come through the gift of **prophecy**, where future, necessary matters need to be known. We see that Agabus "indicated by the Spirit... a famine" [Acts 11.28]. It can come through a **sense of being "forbidden"** by the Holy Spirit/Spirit of Jesus to speak the word in Asia and in Bithynia [Acts 16.6-7].

Paul's **spirit was provoked** concerning the idolatry in Athens [Acts 17.16]. Or it may simply be an **implanted desire, confirmed by an opportunity** [Acts 19.21]. It may come as a **trance**, [similar to Peter] in the temple in Jerusalem [Acts 22.17-21]. It can come by **an appearance, an epiphany** such as where the Lord stood beside Paul to encourage him [Acts 23.11]. The use of angelic messengers also occurs; an **"angel of the God to whom I belong"** encouraged Paul, so that he could encourage non-believing sailors [Acts 27.21-25].

208 - The Gift of the Spirit was the sole test of communion.

[1] Jews: an ancient, exclusive, covenant people.

The admission of the Gentiles to the body of Christ, under the impulsion of the Spirit, was an important and dangerous work. Dangerous in that it presented to the Church a revelation of the mind of God that brought forward difficult and explosive issues. But the same Spirit who lead them into this situation, helped them with powerful moment-by-moment wisdom to resolve them in highly practical ways.

Before Christ came, the revelation had been made through the Jews. They had been taken by God into covenant and had a life expressed through rites and ceremonies. Christ had appeared within that nation and within that covenant. He accepted the authority of Moses and upheld it by word and example. He observed feasts, He learned the Scriptures and quoted them. He was condemned within the covenant because he was charged with blasphemy. No one ever argued that Christ, by life or example, had overthrown the Law.

Christ appointed apostles within the covenant. He had found faith among Gentiles but called no Gentile to preach to Gentiles. How could anyone go outside this covenant? Would such converts be inside and outside at the same time? Could they follow Christ within the covenant? Could they accept Christ and accept Moses whom Christ accepted? It was a dangerous experiment.

[2] Gentiles: an ancient, excluded, rejected people.

The gods of the heathen were degrading and were abominations; contaminating every righteous man. The morals of the heathen were certainly requiring change. Ritual purity they gave no thought to, fornication was practised as not even a vice, but part of their religions. To teach men to believe in Christ and not to teach them the law seemed impossible. If Jews needed the law at home to direct them, what of those far away? If uncircumcised Gentiles were admitted, what would this mean for the circumcised faithful Jews? And if some could be saved without the Law then so could all. This is to forsake the covenant.

The example of Christ, the duty of disciples, the religious privileges of the Jews, to leave all this was a wicked and foolish thing? The answer was found in the amazing fact that God gave to the Gentiles the Holy Spirit.

209 - The reigning Christ was active in Word and the Spirit's Work

Luke speaks of Jesus as one who came among us; his ministry is summed up in what He did and taught [Acts 1.1]. The doing and the teaching are often summed up as the words and works of Jesus.

It doesn't surprise us that there is a saying and doing of the Spirit as well. The Spirit can be seen in His words and works – they go together and the Act of the apostles presents them to us as always in tandem.

The statement of the words and works of the Spirit are a wonderful revelation of His Person as the Spirit of Christ. For the meaning of deeds is never clear unless there is a word about them from the person who is doing them. In that sense they testify to the personal nature of the Spirit. They also testify to the submission of Him to the Son of God. For they tell us of His relation to Christ in that the words and works of the Spirit are also the words and works of the Son and, because of the Son therefore of the Father.

Event without interpretation is meaningless. It is the same with our history into which God has come. The deeds of God are ambiguous unless there is a prophetic word to state what they mean. This is the same "this is that" theme in the Acts. The forward promises of God in the Old Testament are now being brought to fruition and so they are identified as to their meaning, which has been stated before but is now seen in the light of developments which God had foreshadowed.

We have looked at the works of the Spirit which were outlined in the Acts just as the works of Jesus could be seen and known before there was a receiving of Jesus for who He is. So the works of the Spirit of Christ show us what it was that the early church experienced Him doing [works], and saying [word] before they came to understand the revelation of His Person shown in what He was doing.

210 - The works of the Spirit

We have seen the coming of the Spirit Himself is accompanied with external signs such as wind, tongues of fire and speaking with tongues - languages [Acts 2.2-4]. Similar to the works of Jesus, there are signs [Acts 8.6-8,13, 14.3]; deliverances, healings, great miracles even resurrections from the dead, as in the case of Dorcas [Acts 9.40-41].

There is speaking with tongues exalting God [Acts 10.44-46] as the hand of the Lord was with them and a large number who believed turned to the Lord [Acts 11.21].

Among the believers and preachers there is discernment; and word of knowledge, prophecy, deliverance [Acts 13.10-11, 14.9-10,16.16-18,20.10]. Paul is delivered from the serpent bite [Acts 28.3 –6]

Signs and wonders are done by the hands of the apostles; there are healings done through handkerchiefs and aprons, and evil spirits leaving after being commanded [Acts 19.10-20]. Paul heals Publius father of fever and dysentery, and others as well [Acts 28.7-9].

What the Spirit was doing as His works is seen in the evangelistic operations that Luke presents to us as the spontaneous expansion of the Church. What the Lord was saying as His

word was coming to be said through the human mouths of the Church. There is a going out of the Word accompanied by the works of the Spirit; this is the central driving theme of Luke's account in Acts.

211 - The ministry of the Word attended by the Spirit

What Luke calls the ministry of the word [Acts 6.4], involved proclaiming Christ [Acts 8.4-5], or preaching the good news about the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ [Acts 8.12].

As to content, they preached Jesus [Acts 8.35], bearing the Name before people...[Acts 9.15];, proclaiming Jesus as the Son of God [Acts 9.20].

This action was called preaching the gospel [Acts 8.25,40, 14.7,15,21], and "this word" [Acts 8.21], was really a bearing witness to the word of his grace [Acts 14.3]. They spoke boldly in the name of Jesus [Acts 9.27-28]. This word of the Lord could grow and multiply as others passed it on [Acts 12.24,15.36,19.20].

[1] The word is coming through the mouths of men by the Spirit.

The word of the Spirit through the evangelists [some of whom are apostles] led them to call upon men and women to know the works and words of Jesus. They show that God has worked his salvation through Jesus as His Son, delivered Him up for us, raised Him from the dead and exalted Him to the place of honour beside Him as Father, to rule over all.

The Spirit adorned the preached Word with miracles that testified to the honour of the Son by the Father and revealed the power of the Name of Jesus to bring salvation. Or sometimes, the Spirit led the occasion of the preaching by a miraculous work that signalled the preachers to speak in explanation of the event. In the hearers, the word of the evangelists led to an internal experience.

[2] The work of the Spirit began

[i] by bringing an inward conviction.

We see that the Spirit lead men and women into a conviction about Jesus Christ; concerning their former unbelief about Him as the Son of God; concerning His vindication as a righteous One by speaking of His ascension to the Father; and concerning the judgment which is now upon that rebellious angel, Satan; the so-called ruler of the world [John 16]. The Word also brought to them

[ii] an inward testimony of the Spirit.

This was registered in the spirit of the person, that they knew God as Father and were now children of God [Romans 8.16]. This inward word of the Spirit assured their hearts of the love of God for them [Romans 5.5] and that there was no condemnation of God on their life

[Romans 8.1]. This inward experience of the Spirit became public as people gave expression to it. It came to

[iii] outward expression in people glorifying God.

They were freely giving expression to what they had come to see as true through the word of the evangelists. They said it with their mouths that "Jesus is Lord" [1 Corinthians 12.3] and that God was known to them as a dear Father [Galatians 4.4]. This confession, a public utterance, was a sign that within them was the presence of the received Spirit of God. What came out of their mouth was a sign of some change that had been worked in their heart. It also came to

[iv] outward expression in the tongues, foreign to the speaker, but intelligible to the listener.

So the public word-ministry was re-duplicated in the receivers of the preached word. It stated something about the mercy and passion of the Spirit for the going forward of the Word in a spontaneous expansion of its area of reception in men and women. The Spirit also gave to them to have a

[v] discernment about things spiritual,

They could understand and participate in the very mind of Christ [1 Corinthians 2.15-16]; they had a spiritual judgment in matters they needed to discern.

6 - Paul's way of expressing the Person & Work of the Spirit

212 - The role of the Spirit

See Fee, [1994] See section 12: Boan, [2013] Jesus Exalted # 151

We noticed that Paul undertook that, at the Resurrection, world history is broken into two ages [Boan, [2013] Jesus Exalted # 151]. Paul thinks of us as Christians living "between the times" – in the sense of between two resurrections. We are already raised with Christ, in respect to our persons, and we await our future bodily resurrection [Romans 6.4-5; 8.10-11]. The giving of the Spirit to each person was part of the Old Testament promise of the New Covenant [Jeremiah 31.31-33, Ezekiel 36.23-27,37; Joel 2]. In Paul's perspective, the Spirit is both the guarantee concerning the future still to come and the evidence of the future having dawned.

213 - Three Pauline metaphors: pledge, firstfruit, and seal.

See Boan, [2013] Jesus Exalted # 146

[a] Down payment or “pledge” [ASV] [2 Corinthians 1.21-22, 5.5, Ephesians 1.14].

In classical trading, as old as the Old Testament, an ἀρραβων was a small sum of money paid as an early installment which clinched a deal [Genesis 38.18]. It secured an article to the buyer and the balance of the payment would follow the down-payment. In this way the Holy Spirit is seen as a down payment of our inheritance; He secures that there is a greater glory to follow.

[b] Firstfruit [See Boan, [2013] Jesus Exalted # 146]

Similar to the down payment, firstfruits conveys an assurance of more to yet come [Romans 8.23]. It is also used of Christ’s resurrection as a down payment of ours [1 Corinthians 15.20,23] A pledge of the final harvest is the firstfruits of the spirit, a pledge of more to follow [Ephesians 1.13ff].

[c] Sealing [2 Corinthians 1.21-22; Ephesians 1.13; 4.30]

Sealing speaks of us as being stamped with likeness of our owner. It marks His ownership by the Holy Spirit. We also come under the protection of the owner. These two pictures of [1] to bear the likeness, and of [2] ownership, lead to an assurance within our persons, worked by the Spirit.

214 - The Spirit: power for new moral life, and guarantor of resurrection

See Romans 8.11

The Spirit is not the agent of our resurrection but the guarantor of it. When our redeemed, resurrected bodies are called ‘spiritual’ this is not a statement about their substance, as if compared with material. Rather, it is a contrast of existence between present and heavenly. The future body is supernaturally fitted for the future life. The redemption of the body has to do with it becoming a spiritual body.

215 - Gentiles have received the Spirit promised to Israel.

Paul’s Gentile mission, always done in the face of Jewish rejection as a witness to them of their part in the mission, was based on the inclusion of the Gentile [Galatians 3]. This joint new humanity expresses that there is one people of God.

Paul shows that the fulfilment to the blessing of Abraham was the Spirit coming [Galatians 3.14]. Also, Paul tells Gentile believers they were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, by which he means the Holy Spirit promised to Israel [Ephesians 1.13-14]. True circumcision is

not cutting off of the foreskin but is rather a matter of the heart and is not “by the Spirit, not by the letter” [Romans 2.29; Deuteronomy 30.1-6].

The Gentiles’ inclusion is seen quite apart from the Law; they now serve in the “newness of the Spirit” and not in the “oldness of the letter”. [2 Corinthians 3.1-18; 3.6; Galatians 4.23-29; Romans 2.29,7.6]. Indeed, the reason for the new covenant was the failure of the old to effect a righteousness coming from an obedient heart [Ezekiel 36.36-37.14; Jeremiah 31.31-34]

216 - *The Spirit and the Law*

See Ephesians 2.11-16

The gift of the Spirit is the new covenant replacement of the Law and the fulfilment of the Law’s righteous requirement. This is the key to understanding Paul’s view of the Law. Some things are gone in regard to Law, particularly using the Law to identify the people of God, or to identify one’s relation with God. The law no longer marks the boundaries of the people of God.

But some things stay; such as the Spirit leading people in paths of God to live so as to express the intent of the Torah in the first place. In this sense the Torah will go on “until all things are accomplished”.

“Paul, of course, is also a realist. The coming of the Spirit to replace Torah by effecting its intended righteousness it itself both already and not yet. That is, the coming of the Spirit means not that the divine perfection has set in, but “divine infection”. Our lives are now led by the one responsible for inspiring the Law in the first place. But that does not mean that God’s people cannot still be “overtaken in a fault” [Galatians 6.1]. The resolution of such “between the times” trespassing of God’s “righteous requirement” is for the rest of God’s Spirit people to restore such a one through the Spirit’s gentleness. It means forgiveness and grace; but it does not mean constantly living in sin, as though the Spirit were not really sufficient for the life in the present.” Fee, [1994], page 816

217 - *Spirit and Flesh*

Read Galatians 5.17; Romans 7.14-25; 2 Corinthians 10.2-5

[1] *Flesh*

The last days registers the changed situation which arrived at the coming of the Spirit. Paul

uses the word “flesh” to describe an existence before those days and outside of Christ – the existence of the old age which is now passing. So, if he speaks of living a life “of the flesh” or a “fleshly” life, he would mean that old way of life that was there before the Spirit came and before our renovation by the Spirit. It would be a life lived “in the flesh”, carried on within the sphere of that old existence, and so dominated by the flesh [Romans 7.14].

In saying that it is lived “in the flesh” we may think of that as: [a] being a sinful life because it would be dominated by the self-centred desires of the flesh; [b] being a creaturely life weak in comparison to the power of the Spirit of God. Both [a] and [b] can be thought of together, for that is saying no more than creaturely, fallen life is dominated by sinful desires.

But under the new “last days” there is now a way in which we can think of creaturely, fallen humans who have received the life of the Spirit of Christ. So that they may live in a way which is no longer dominated by their fleshly desires but still may live as creaturely, weak ones in a body that is not yet redeemed. That is, in terms of what is said above, the situation can now be not [a] but still [b].

Under this situation then, thinking of the life of the renovated Christian living in the last days before the redemption of his body – we could say that to live “in the flesh” simply means to live in that tension; but it would not imply that it was sinful. It is in this sense that we could understand the central statement of Paul

“...I have been crucified with Christ 20 I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me; and now, in the flesh, I live in the faith of the Son of God who loved me and handed himself over for me” [Galatians 2.19b-20 my translation.]

He means “I live now in the flesh” in the sense of [b] above, while at the same time he testifies that he lives by the faith of the Son of God, who lives within Him – because the Spirit has come.

[2] Spirit

But to be “in the Spirit” is to be found living as regenerated, under the changed situation the coming of the Holy Spirit has inaugurated. It is a life lived under the sufficiency of the Spirit. Frailty and weakness are not necessarily sinful. In the following text we see this careful delineation of ideas by the use of the prepositions “according to”, “in” and “of”.

“2 Yea, I beseech you, that I may not when present shew courage with the confidence wherewith I count to be bold against some, which count us as if we walked according to the flesh. 3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh 4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds); 5 Casting down imaginations...” 2 Corinthians 10.2-5 [RV 1881]

[a] B.F. Westcott [b:1825d:1901] and F.J.A. Hort [b1828d:1892], in their 1881 translation, despite its now archaic language, preserve the Pauline language with faithfulness. Here we see that Paul’s opponents are implying that he walks “according to the flesh” which has

the sense of 'according to the standard of the flesh'. They are making it a claim that he lives in the old way, as if the Spirit had not come. It is a pejorative comment, meaning Paul is self-centred and living dominated by the old life.

[b] Verse 3 makes clear that distinction we have been speaking of above – Paul can think of himself as living “in the flesh” but not necessarily acting “according to the flesh”. He is living out a human, incarnate existence, with all the weakness that entails, but he is not dominated by the old life.

[c] His weapons - the preaching of the Gospel - are not “of the flesh”. That is they are not of the old age. And because they are not, they are “mighty” - not weak and transitory.

This text makes clear that when Paul uses the spirit-flesh contrast he is using eschatological language, a word-fall that is based on the change of ages that has ensued at the coming of the Spirit. He is not saying something about human sinfulness. And the way he makes this clear is through the use of prepositions attached to the word “flesh”.

Significantly we might compare and contrast the following:

“2 I beg of you that when I am present I may not have to show boldness with such confidence as I count on showing against some who suspect us of acting in worldly fashion.³ For though we live in the world we are not carrying on a worldly war,⁴ for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds.” [2 Corinthians 10.2-4 RSV 1946].

[a] The translators of the RSV [1946, revised in 1971] have abandoned entirely the Pauline word-fall for another - in their mind, clearer – way of saying the same thing.

[b] Abandoning the “flesh” imagery of Paul they have opted for a more Johannine way of stating the eschatological tension which lies behind his distinction. They use words such as “worldly” and “in the world”. In so doing they make clear that it is an eschatological idea, not the anthropological one, which dominates his meaning.

[c] As to getting the message across, the translation does not fail, but it illustrates that in abandoning the Pauline word-fall, the RSV sheds no light on the study of Pauline usage of “flesh”. We need comparisons with other translations for that.

218 - In the Spirit: Power and weakness together in human life

In understanding the Spirit as God's empowering presence and the theme of human weakness, Paul walks a radical “middle” way in this area.

[1] *The confusion of weakness with sin.*

There are those who confuse weakness [life “in the flesh”] with sin [life “according to the flesh”]. Here the modern discussion of the Christian life has often gone astray. Many Christians think of the Christian life as a constant flesh and Spirit tension. And it is! The question

however is whether that is a statement about sinful man or about the last days tension.

If to live “in the flesh” simply means to live in an, as yet, unredeemed human body while we, as to our persons, are redeemed; then to live “in the flesh” brings with it an internal struggle. But it does not make life “in the flesh” sinful; just weak. It would however, be quite a different matter from living “according to the flesh” which is to yield to the human bias to sinfulness.

We are not to consider the Christian life as a constant falling down and then starting all over again and again. We ought to look for the power of the victorious life over sin. But if we mix up the idea of the sinfulness of man with the flesh of man, then we may have confused ourselves into a constant defeated position. It will manifest in the turning away from human, rich, creaturely values as inherently sinful, when they are simply creaturely and are to be enjoyed without sin.

That Paul does not include Spirit-flesh antithesis within his understanding of being empowered in weakness is that he can speak so positively of living in weakness, it is an occasion of glorying and boasting and thus for eschatological joy. This is because the human weakness is the way of showing that the miraculous power of the living Christian must therefore be a matter of God’s own work - and so brings God glory, not the human.

[2] The mistaken view that weakness is dishonouring to God

Conversely, there were tendencies to triumphalism, particularly in late 20th Century America. Pain of any kind was seen as evil, and consequently, suffering was to be avoided at all costs. Here the discussion intersects the Christian power of the Holy Spirit and our cultures’ view of suffering and pain as inherently evil. It sets out to negate weakness, it tells us that weakness is dishonouring to God. It implies that we must always be powerful and successful.

Paul holds to a radical middle way; of the “now” and also the “not yet”. The problem is that modern Christians often make for separating matters that actually co-exist in Paul; whereas he holds them together. He was glad when he suffered; not because he enjoyed suffering itself - as of in some masochistic way - but because he saw suffering in terms of discipleship. It was to follow in the ways of Christ who entered his glory through suffering, and in doing so redeemed the people of God. Paul is willing to suffer, for Christ’s sake, and for the church’s sake, and to rejoice in it – it confirmed the reality of his discipleship.

For the highly materialistic, easy, comfortable, not to say middle class, upwardly mobile, ambitious life style in which most of us are emerged and swamped, the whole idea of not being anyone especially notable, of simply serving folks and staying faithful to the Master, is not very acceptable. And people who try and live the modern empowered way, making everything of their life that they can in realising their full potential etc find it very difficult to carry about the weakness of human life as a vessel so necessary to seeing that the power is God’s and not their own.

We need a strong balance here – not of living mediocre, self-deprecating lives – which is just an excessive parody of one side; - nor that of living in a self-referred, self-centred pushy way that lifts up people to idolise them as a parody of another side. Instead we must find a way of being able to use humble people as role models; because they walk the middle way of Paul's rejoicing of weakness as really there in human life and yet, in the midst of the empowerment of God. Humility is actually a great strength. It is an attribute of our God, who can, and does, humble Himself to bring his love to bear on us for our salvation.

Paul does expect there to be "power".

[1] There is a clear understanding in Paul that the Spirit is evidenced in the way renewed people relate to each other. [a] There are visible manifestations of the Spirit's presence [1 Corinthians 2.4-5; Galatians 3.5; Romans 15.19] [b] There are charisms exercised [1 Thessalonians 5.19-22; 1 Corinthians 12-14; Galatians 3.2-5, Romans 12.6] in the gatherings of the Christians. [c] There is a living out of the love of Christ [Ephesians 3.16-20].

[2] And yet, there is a close correlation between power and present weaknesses. [Romans 8.17-27; 2 Corinthians 12.9]. Knowing Christ is to know both the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings [Philippians 3.9-10]. To live like the Lord is to "fill up" his sufferings [Colossians 1.24]. But Paul does expect power in the midst of these, but the suffering is accepted.

See the similar emphasis of Hebrews 11.32-38. Some lived in faith and saw miracles performed, others lived in faith and were tortured to death. All were commended for their faith.

7 - Trinitarian Understanding

219 - God can only be known because He is willing to be

See Boan [2013] God as man DS2 #58 p. 63-65

God can be known only because He is willing to be. Further, God can only be known through God. Only God can reveal God. Which means through His incarnate Word and by His Spirit.

As we saw in Boan [2013] God as man DS2 #58 p. 63-65, there are exclusive, holy relations between the Father and the Son. This means, amongst other things, that the revelation of the One is dependant on the revealing be the Other, and vice versa.

220 – Exclusive relations of knowing - Word and Spirit

*Read Matt 11.25-28 and the parallel in Luke 10.21-24; Torrance, CDoG, [1996]
Torrance, [1980] ,The Ground and Grammar of Theology*

"At that time Jesus answered and said, "I praise Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you hid these things from the wise and the intelligent and you revealed them to babes. [26] Yes Father, for thus it was well pleasing in your sight. [27] All things have been handed to me from my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, nor does anyone know the Father, except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. [28] Come unto me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest..." [Matt 11.25-28]

We have already noted this section of Scripture [Boan [2013] God as man DS2 #58 p. 63-65]. In it we saw that "all things" [a] Refers not to the eternal Word but the incarnate Word, and that [b] "all things" means the redemptive attributes and power of Christ.

In regards to the Word, there is an exclusive relation of mutual knowing between the Father and the Son [Matt 11.25-27; Luke 10.21-22].

In regards to the Son, He is the bridge, the Mediator between God and man [John 14.6]. In regards to the Spirit, there is an exclusive relation of mutual knowing between the Father and the Spirit [1 Corinthians 2.9-12]. So, to receive the Holy Spirit is to know God through receiving Himself.

Further, the Spirit is sent by the Father in the name of the Son [John 14.26; 16.12-15, 1 Corinthians 2.9-12]. It is only through Christ and in the Spirit that we have access to the Father [Ephesians 2.18].

If we tried to state the distinction of function here we see that:

There is Mediation by Christ	There is Impartation by Spirit
God is revealed,	We participated in God
God is apprehended	God's life is shared
God may be known	God is communed with

So we see that the content is determined and informed by what has taken place in Jesus Christ as the Word of God. The knowing of God that comes through Christ is made our actual experience in the communion of the Spirit.

Christ, as the Word of God, from the Godward-side, embodies the exclusive language of God to mankind. At the same time however, from the manward-side He is also the faithful response in knowledge and obedience of mankind towards God. This He does in His unique

role as the Mediator between man and God.

221 – Knowledge of God for us is centred on Christ.

All of our knowing of God is centred on Christ because He is God's self-revelation and self-

communication in the Incarnation. The Incarnation is both a word of God to us and an act of God for us. Christ is identical with the Being of God.

In this one Mediator between God and man, who is Himself God and man, all our authentic knowledge of God is derived and understood from his Person. Jesus Christ is the one place, in space and time, where we may know God the Father. We need to think of both the Holy Spirit and Christ as being not some sort of intermediate powers used in mediating God to us; they are *God Himself revealing Himself*.

222 – Something new about God has entered our world.

When we are presented with understanding God as one God in a Trinity of Persons, we are not reasoning from something with which we are familiar with and then bringing that knowledge along with us to understand something new and unfamiliar. Such reasoning is the normal way of the world, from the known to the unknown.

What has happened to us is that God has come near to us and made Himself known in Christ. Yet, when we come to think of Christ as fully as we can, we become aware of mystery in the One we have come, by a miracle of God's grace, to know. There are deep matters which we can't wrap our mind around in the One that who has drawn near to us. In Christ, as He mediates God to us, we are given access to God from His side. So we begin to have to learn to reasoning from the unknown side of our experience to the known, from the other side of the boundary between man and God. This will call for a new outlook. And this was the great difficulty confronting the Church immediately the gospel was proclaimed in the ancient world.

It called for a knowledge that is

“known by faith, creatively called forth from people in response to the thrust of its intrinsic truth upon them in sharp antithesis to what they had believed about God before”.

Torrance, CDoG, [1996] p.19

It implied the need for new concepts, new ways of thinking and speaking. If there was to be thinking and speech of God, then the ordinary ways of thought and speech would have to be refined.

223 – God's self-revelation creates the framework for speaking about it.

The central truth is the deity of Christ and the Holy Spirit. It is only through the Son and the Spirit that saving faith comes to us. That they are of one substance with the Father, sharing the very nature of God, is the key truth which must be applied to the Son and the Holy Spirit to maintain the balance of the Gospel from every side.

224 – *Our 'revealed' knowledge of God is uniquely from Himself.*

The self revelation of God is necessarily exclusive. This is because:

[a] we can only know God through God

[b] there is only one Lord Jesus Christ and one event of the Incarnation.

Revelation is not something about God, not a datum, some information studied by standing off and reflecting on it by ourselves. To think we could stand off from God and look at Him as something we contemplate and intellectually master is the sin of making an idol. It is because of this that we are forbidden to make graven images of God [Exodus 20.1ff and Isaiah 42.8].

Rather, revelation is God revealing Himself out of Himself so that He who reveals and the one revealed are the Same. So, God is at once the Subject of the revelation and the Object of the revelation.

[1] The "Oneness" of God - 'the Lord our God is one Lord' - is asserted over against the polytheism of the times of the Exodus. God taught Israel that He is jealous and required an exclusive commitment to Himself [Deuteronomy 6.4]. Jesus taught the same [Matthew 22.37, Mark 12.29ff, Luke 10.27]. To not tolerate other gods at all is not arrogance; but humility and obedience we owe God that calls us to stand on this exclusive position He has revealed.

[2] The "Threeness" is asserted over against Unitarianism. So the Trinity requires that we set aside all other religious approaches to the knowledge of God. It abolishes entertaining alternative concepts of God; they are for us as we receive God's self revelation, invalid. This doesn't mean that God does not make Himself known to people in the world from beginning of creation; He has and does, although without revealing Himself in the personal way that He has in Christ.

225 – *Three Persons interpenetrating one another*

This revelation is not given to us in a piecemeal way even though at different times, in the Scriptures, the immediate focus may be on one or two of the divine Persons and the third perhaps, is not in immediate focus. Compare, for example, the opening of 2 Corinthians compared with the benediction of that letter.

It may be said that the doctrine of the Trinity is implicit in and unfolded from Christ for it is "in Christ that the Godhead in all its fullness dwells embodied" [Colossians 2.9, 1.19].

226 – The central axis of the Incarnation of the Word of God.

The starting point for all our knowledge of God is the incarnation of God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ the Word of God and by the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father through the Son, Who are of one Being and Act with God the Father.

It is because it is the Word who became incarnate, and not the Spirit, all the truth content comes from Him as the Word made flesh. It is because the Son is the central axis of the content of revelation, we need to make our knowledge of the Spirit clear through the Son, simply because the Spirit is not in a body, like the Son.

“He is God of God but not man of man, so that our knowledge of the Holy Spirit rests directly on the ultimate objectivity of God as God, unmediated by secondary objectivities of space and time through which God is revealed in the Son...Throughout all God's self-revelation to us in the incarnate Son, the Holy Spirit is the creative Agent in mediating knowledge of God to us in himself and the creative Agent in our reception and understanding of that revelation, although He is not himself the Word of that revelation or the Form which that revelation assumes as it comes from the Father and is appropriated by us. But because it is in the Spirit as the immediate presence and power of God in it all that we know God in this way, the Father through the Son and the Son from the Father, we know the Holy Spirit in Himself as Lord God no less than the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified.” (Torrance, CDoG, 1996) p165-6

While the Spirit is not himself the Word, is not incarnate, and does not speak of Himself, He is the Spirit of the Father and the Son who eternally dwells in the hidden depths of God's Being.

He is sent by the Father in the name of the Son to dwell with us and make us capable of receiving and understanding the Word. In this way He fulfils and makes effective the personal self-address of God to us; this is in the communion of the Holy Spirit.

227 – *The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*

2 Corinthians 13.14

[1] *The early Christians worshipped Jesus Christ as God, for they knew the following matters of life.*

[a] Jesus Christ cannot be known by only thinking about Him. Jesus Christ does not address our minds only but He addresses the whole man. Knowledge of Christ can only be gained through discipleship, as we renounce ourselves, take up our cross and follow him to obey Him. It is a matter of a personal encounter that engages our whole selves [John 3.16-17].

[b] In him we meet the embodiment of the Majestic God, breaking in on His world as Immanuel, the Lord Jesus. He is not a double for God, a locum tenens, but the incarnate presence of YHWH, God Himself.

[c] Only through personal faith and commitment can we come to live in the presentation of God through Christ. This presentation comes to us through the incarnation, the apostolic preaching of the witnesses and His coming to dwell with us in the person of His Spirit [1 Timothy 2.5].

[d] The salvation experience, forced upon the church the deity of the Lord, the resurrection had the effect of illuminating his whole life and ministry, disclosing the heart and purpose of it [1 John 5.20; John 20.28, Revelation 1.13-18, 5.6-14, 19.11-16].

[e] Our understanding of the presentation of God through Christ is not a matter of some texts strung together. It is a revelation we come to understand, it comes together for us

“when we indwell it, meditate upon it, tune into it, penetrate inside it, and absorb it into ourselves, and find the foundations of our life and thought changing under the creative and saving impact of Christ, and are saved by Christ, and reconciled to God in Christ that we believe in Him as Lord and God.” (Torrance, CDoG, 1996) p.53

[f] Our grasp on this presentation doesn't come about without renouncing ourselves in a repentant re-thinking of all that we are and claim to know, without our being crucified with him in heart and mind and being raised to new life. It involves a determination to know the power of his resurrection, fellowship of his sufferings, conformity to his death [Philippians 3.7-14].

[2] *The early Christians distinguished Christ from the Father and the Spirit*

[a] So we are led to distinguish between Christ the Son of God and the God the Father, while at the same time we think of Christ and worship Him as Lord and God.

[b] This leads us to think of a *differentiation* as well as a *oneness* in the inner life of God be-

tween Father and Son, between God and God [John 1.1].

[c] This is also true of the Holy Spirit in His 'otherness' [difference from] and oneness with the Father and the Son. After the glorifying of Christ, which is the lifting up of the crucifixion and resurrection as an atonement; the power of the Spirit is poured out on the Church in his personal fullness.

[3] We think of the Holy Spirit, along with the Son, who engages in atoning intercession for us and guarantees our redemption through Him. Like the Son He is confessed and worshipped as God of God.

“...it may be said that it is finally in the light of what took place in the death and resurrection of Christ as Lord and Saviour and at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit promised by the Father was poured out upon the Church, that ground is given us for the discernment of God as inherently triune. It is in the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ for our sakes that we really know that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is God our Father. And it is in the power of the eternal Spirit through whom Christ offered himself in spotless sacrifice to God that we know that he who died on the Cross is the Father's own Son whom he did not spare but delivered up for us all, and it is through the same Spirit that we call upon God as our Father.” (Torrance, CDoG, 1996) p.54 emphasis his.

228 - *The Love of God*

God's love is only known to us through Christ dwelling in our hearts, by Holy Spirit [Romans 5.5 Ephesians 3.17]

[1] We are thinking of the love of God the Father

[a] When we call God “Father” the ideas are not detached from the Old Testament figurative language of parental responsibility. But we are not reading into God, transferring onto Him our human conceptions of mothers or fathers as the heathen do.

“For thou art our Father, though Abraham does not know us and Israel does not acknowledge us; thou, O LORD,, art our Father, our Redeemer from old is thy name” Isaiah 63.16 RSV

“And you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD, Israel is my first-born son, 23 and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may serve me...” Exodus 4.22-3 RSV

“When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.” Hosea 11.1 RSV

[b] Rather, the idea of sonship that is most significant for redemption in Israel comes to focus

on the servant-son of Isaiah. Jesus Christ gathers up the whole filial relation of Israel to God enacted in history in such a way that Father/Son concepts are brought uniquely together.

Because there is an unbroken continuity in Being and Act in God, it means that Christ shows us the Father in showing us that He is his Father. See John 5.17, 10,30 where oneness in act and being are asserted.

[c] Two facets to the knowledge of Father in the New Testament. He is known in a:

[i] General way as Creator/Provider for all mankind [Ephesians 3.15, 4.6]

[ii] Specific way as a unique relation to the Son. He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ [Ephesians 1.3]

The important thing to see is that Christ did not make known God as Father and then spoke of Him as His Father: it was the reverse. He first made Him known as peculiarly His own Father, the Father of the only begotten Son, and as such revealed Him through His own Sonship to be the God and Father of all.

In this way, God is presented to us as eternally Father in Himself, as the Father of the Son, before the foundation of the world and apart from creation, and so is father in the sense that is absolutely unique and transcendent.

In thinking this way our human form and speech are transformed under the power of divine revelation. The word "father" is now being used not as a word confined to our own experience of having an earthly father. But now we are not using that limited meaning to yield up a meaning of God to us - that would be to make God in the image of our own father. Further, the simple meaning of "father" in that sense would not carry what is meant by "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ".

Now, we are using the term "father" not as a word to look at, as a thing in itself, but as a word to look through - it has become a window for us. Theology uses these words, which have a limited meaning to us, to look through them to see and understand - in a way not limited by the simple meaning of the word - something of God that is meaningful and yet not exhaustive. The thought is meaningful, yet maintains the element of mystery that is right for us.

So we can call God "Father" in the sense that He made us. And the New Testament speaks of this revelation of the love of God to all his creatures [Matthew 5.43-45, Luke 15, Romans 5.6-8 1 John 3.16, 4.9-10]. But the exclusive relations of knowing between the Father and the Son is revealed when this love is expressed to mankind in the death of Christ. Then we need a language to express such exclusive Father/Son relations. Relations that include Jesus laying down His life for us at the authorisation of the Father, with Whom He is one [John 10, 15,17,30]. Relations that include the unique bond between Father and Son mentioned in John 5.20-23 and chapter 17].

229 - The fellowship of the Spirit

God Himself is the personal content of his revelation to us in the incarnate Son. Since it is only through Himself that communion with God is accessible to us, that communion granted us in the Holy Spirit. By the Spirit God brings the address of His Word to us – this is revelation. He also works in us the hearing and understanding of that Word - it's reception. This means that God creates, by the presence of His Spirit within us, a relation of Himself to Himself.

We are given an understanding of the Spirit in an intuitive way. Later, as we look at practical matters of the Christian life, we shall see that there is a union of our spirit with the Holy Spirit who comes to dwell within us. We learn how to work with this intuitive way of knowing.

Objectively speaking, concerning the Holy Spirit, from Scripture we learn the following things.

[a] He is the holy Spirit [Isaiah 63]. His divine Nature and Majesty is reflected in the teaching of Jesus concerning the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit as being unforgiveable [Matt 12.31, Mk 3.29 and Luke 12.10]. He is called Lord, in the same way as refers to Christ and Father [2 Corinthians 3.17-18]. He is inseparably related to the mission of the incarnate Son.

[b] 1 Corinthians 2.9-13 informs us that [i] No one knows the depths of God but the Spirit. [ii] He dwells within God and knows the depths of his eternal Being. [iii] He shares in the inner communion and knowing between the Father and the Son.

[c] the Holy Spirit is intensely personal – speaking, crying, witnessing, grieving, interceding, intervening, creating, rebuking, judging etc. John 15.26; 16.13ff. Linguistically, “spirit”, in Greek, is a neuter word but the Spirit is called “he” by Jesus making clear he is a real Person.

[d] Being Spirit, He has no face, but it is through Him we see the Face of Jesus Christ and in the Face of Christ we see the Face of the Father.

[e] the Gift of the Holy Spirit is the Gift of Himself – the Gift and the Giver are one.

[f] It is through the Spirit that Jesus is placarded before the world [Galatians 3.1ff, 5.1ff]

230 – The Paraclete

John 14, 16.14-15

[1] As Christ is the Advocate of men and women He speaks up for us in the presence of God. The Holy Spirit is another Advocate of men and women speaking up for us from within our persons and so into the presence of God. But the Spirit does not substitute for the Son. He is vicarious, reflecting the advocacy and priestly intercession of Christ. As Jesus Himself shows us the Father, the Spirit shows us Christ and makes us know the Father in the Son.

[2] It is not the function of Holy Spirit to bear witness to Himself in his distinctive personal Being, but to bear witness to Christ, glorifying Him as Lord and Saviour. In this way, God the

Father is glorified in the revelation of His divine Being in the Son [2 Corinthians 3.18; 1 Peter 4.14].

[3] The Holy Spirit is self-effacing by nature, He hides Himself, as it were, behind the Father in the Son and behind the Son in the Father; but by throwing his eternal light upon the Father through the Son, brings the radiance of God's glory to bear upon us.

[4] So, as the transparent presence, He guards the transcendence of God who infinitely exceeds all that finite minds can grasp. Nevertheless in His light we see light. Our trust in the Holy Spirit is powerfully expressed through an analogy with the Sun that rises in the sky. As the sun rises we are very foolish to look at it for itself. And we do not think of Sun as something to see. Rather, we rely on the Sun in the sense that by it we see everything else. So it is with the Spirit of God. He does not encourage us to focus on Himself, but in His light we see all there is of God that God wills to be seen. We need to trust the Spirit to be the light by which we see all there is to see of God. And as we have seen with the Son, only God can reveal God; so with the Spirit, He reveals God because He is God Himself.





Janice and David Boan, an Australian couple, live in Perth, the capital city of the state of Western Australia.

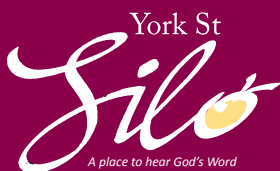
They have been married for 46 years and have five children and 19 grand-children. Throughout this time, they have been teaching the Lord's Word among Christians.

After David was ordained in 1967, he served in two Anglican parishes and a School Chaplaincy in Melbourne. They trained for missionary service but after health issues prevented them going overseas, they taught in a community at the Montrose House and later took the parish of St. Jude's Carlton for seven years. Moving to Perth in Western Australia in 1981, David cared for the Anglican parish of St Alban's in Highgate for seven years.

In 1988, they left the Anglican scene to teach into scattered and smaller groups of Christians in some Australian towns. Later the work extended into the UK, Italy, and India throughout 1995-2000.

At the beginning of 2012, in concert with others, their work became more accessible at the York St Silo, at 4 York Street in North Perth. It is here that David and Jan share the work of the putting forth of God's Word.

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