

Work of the Holy Spirit

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This past weekend we celebrated Pentecost Sunday. Fifty days after Jesus rose from the dead, and ten days after He ascended to heaven, the Holy Spirit was poured out on those who believed Jesus was the Messiah/Christ of God (Acts 2:1-4). In some ways, you could say it was the beginning of the Church. It is the Holy Spirit who baptizes the believer into the body of Christ, whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free (1Cor. 12:13). The body of Christ is another name for the Church. The Holy Spirit not only baptizes the believer into Christ's body but He indwells every believer (Rom. 8:9).

The Christian experiences the ministry of the Holy Spirit in a very personal and intimate way. He testifies to our spirits that we are a child of God and by Him we cry out "Abba, Father" to God (Rom. 8:15,16). The Holy Spirit is a down deposit guaranteeing what is to come at Christ's Second Coming in the new heavens and the new earth when our whole body and soul will be redeemed (Eph. 1:13,14; 4:30). He gives us a foretaste of the powers of the age to come (Heb. 6:4,5). There is coming a day when we will be totally set free and our whole being will be penetrated by God's glory and Spirit.

The ministry of the Holy Spirit not only occurs in a very personal manner but also in a very corporate manner. It is interesting that when the work of the Holy Spirit is mentioned in the New Testament it is often mentioned in connection with Jesus Himself (John 16:12-15) and with the community of God's people. For example, on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2, the Holy Spirit is poured out on all the disciples of Christ and they start speaking in tongues or languages of the many different nations in the Roman Empire. Jews from those different nations, who were in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost, hear the disciples declaring the wonders of God in their different languages (Acts 2:4-12).

The Apostle Peter then stands up and explains what is happening: God is fulfilling the prophecy of Joel 2:28-32 where God had promised to pour out His Spirit on all peoples in the last days. Peter goes on to explain how Jesus is the Messiah, who was crucified by both the Jews and Gentiles, but was raised from the dead on the third day by God. His claims as God's Son and Messiah were vindicated by the resurrection and now the Holy Spirit were being poured out on all those who would repent of their sins and trust the crucified and risen Christ as their Savior.

Three thousand people responded to the message that day as they were brought under conviction by the Holy Spirit. They were all baptized and were added to the Church that day (Acts 2:41).

It goes on to say that this newly formed community of Christians were devoted to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayer. They also helped

whoever was in need through sacrificial giving (Acts 2:42-47). This community was a fellowship of the Holy Spirit in which they were experiencing the spiritual fruit of agape love. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is not only experienced individually by us but even more powerfully in community.

In Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12-14, the Apostle Paul teaches that every believer is given spiritual gifts by the Holy Spirit so that we can minister and edify each other in Christ's body, the Church. Spiritual maturity cannot occur in our lives unless we are a part of a local body of believers in which we are serving through the exercise of our spiritual gifts, and also receiving the ministry of others through the exercise of their spiritual gifts. We do not need to be a Pastor to have a ministry in another person's life.

All we need to do is yield ourselves unreservedly to the indwelling Spirit of God, and to a local body of believers who are in covenant relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. As we faithfully do this, God's purposes in our lives will be more fully realized.