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THE OUTPOURING AND THE MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Introduction

The outpouring and the ministry of the Holy Spirit is a very major area of truth. It is both a major aspect of the significance of what was accomplished at the Cross as well as a part of God's provision for His children in the New Covenant in Christ's blood.

We must pay careful attention to this area of truth which the Scriptures emphasises, so that we can co-operate well with the Lord in what He is seeking to do in our personal lives and in our contribution to the fulfilment of God's purposes. The outpouring and ministry of the Holy Spirit is vital for both of these areas.

In this message, I will begin by showing that the outpouring and ministry of the Holy Spirit flowed forth from and is an important aspect of the significance of what was accomplished at the Cross, as well as a significant provision of God for His children under the New Covenant. I will then go on to consider with you various facets of the ministry of the Holy Spirit to help us appreciate the significance of this provision of God for His children under the New Covenant.

Flowed forth from the death and exaltation of Christ

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit did not take place in isolation. It was directly related to the death and exaltation of Christ. We see this in Acts 2:32-33.

Acts 2:32-33

32 "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.

33 "Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear."

The phrase in verse 32, "This Jesus God raised up again", speaks of the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus. In verse 33, Peter declares that when Christ was exalted to God's right hand, He poured forth the Holy Spirit, which we are told, was a fulfilment of God's promise. One way of appreciating this area of truth is that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is God's stamp of approval on the Lord Jesus Christ for His willingness to die on the Cross.

The apostle John in John 7:39 also associates the outpouring of the Holy Spirit with Christ's death, exaltation and glorification. To appreciate the words of John in its context, let us first look at the words of the Lord Jesus in the preceding verse.

John 7:38

"He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'"

Verse 38 presents a very important truth: "From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water". Obviously, this is not a reference to water in the literal sense. It is the description of a person filled with the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit working mightily from within his being. Verse 39 makes it clear that the "living water" refers to the Holy Spirit.

John 7: 39

But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

In addition, this verse also tells us "the Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified". The word "*given*" is not in the original text. This part of the verse could then read, "For the Spirit was not yet". In what sense is the phrase "not yet" used? Not in the sense that the Holy Spirit was not yet working or ministering prior to that time, but "not yet" with reference to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and the Holy Spirit's ministry thereafter. There is a difference in the role and ministry of the Holy Spirit before and after Pentecost. Until Christ had been glorified, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost would not take place.

We thus see that the outpouring and ministry of the Holy Spirit is linked to and flowed forth from the death of Christ, His exaltation and glorification.

God's provision for His children under the New Covenant

God has provided many privileges for His children in the New Covenant in Christ's blood. One major aspect is the outpouring and ministry of the Holy Spirit. It is God's desire that His children be filled with the Holy Spirit and experience the empowering and transforming work of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

The empowering of the Holy Spirit enables us to be faithful to God and to fulfil His will for our lives. It enables us to overcome personal weaknesses, as well as spiritual opposition from the powers of darkness and all kinds of difficulties along the way, as we seek to advance God's kingdom. It also plays a vital role in helping us to be conformed to the image of Christ and to manifest the character of God and the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

In 2 Corinthians 3, Paul makes a contrast between the New Covenant and the Old Covenant. He refers to the New Covenant in verse 6 and to the Old Covenant in verse 14. He then highlights an important feature of the New Covenant, which concerns the ministry of the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 3:5-8

5 Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God,
6 who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.
7 But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was,
8 how will the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory?

2 Corinthians 3:14

But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ.

Notice what Paul says here about the Holy Spirit in the New Covenant: "servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit", "the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (v. 6), "ministry of the Spirit... even more with glory" (v. 8). By using these phrases, Paul is emphasising that the outpouring and ministry of the Spirit is a distinctive feature of God's provision for His children under the New Covenant—the "new covenant... of the Spirit" (v. 6).

The significance of the outpouring and ministry of the Holy Spirit under the New Covenant**1. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit prophesied in the Old Testament**

The outpouring and ministry of the Holy Spirit under the New Covenant did not happen unannounced. There are several relevant prophetic passages in the Old Testament. We shall refer to two of them.

Joel

The prophet Joel prophesied specifically about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and was quoted by the apostle Peter in Acts 2.

Joel 2:28-32

28 "It will come about after this
That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind;
And your sons and daughters will prophesy,
Your old men will dream dreams,
Your young men will see visions.
29 "Even on the male and female servants
I will pour out My Spirit in those days.
30 "I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth,
Blood, fire and columns of smoke.
31 "The sun will be turned into darkness
And the moon into blood

Before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.

32 "And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the Lord
Will be delivered;

Through the prophet Joel, God said, "I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind" and "I will pour out my Spirit in those days". This promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, when the believers were filled with the Holy Spirit as recorded in Acts 2. As the disciples were gathered in one place, a noise like a violent rushing wind came from heaven and filled the house, and tongues as of fire appeared and rested on each one, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit (vs. 3-4). Some onlookers thought the disciples were drunk and mocked them saying they were full of sweet wine (v. 13). Peter, quoting the passage we have just read in the Book of Joel, explained that they were not drunk, but that what had occurred was a fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel (v. 16).

Acts 2:14-21

14 But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: "Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words.

15 "For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day;

16 but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel:

17 'And it shall be in the last days,' God says,
'That I will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind;
And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
And your young men shall see visions,
And your old men shall dream dreams;

18 Even on My bondslaves, both men and women,
I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit
And they shall prophesy.

19 'And I will grant wonders in the sky above
And signs on the earth below,
Blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke.

20 'The sun will be turned into darkness
And the moon into blood,
Before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come.

21 'And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

Although Peter said that it was a fulfilment of the prophecy by Joel, as far as I can understand, it is likely to be only a partial fulfilment. If we look at the prophecy in greater detail, we will find that there is reference to "wonders in the sky above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke" (vs. 19-20), which did not take place at Pentecost. Verse 20 also mentions of "the great and glorious day of the Lord" that shall come. It would seem a reasonable interpretation to say that

there will be a fuller fulfilment of the prophecy by Joel, associated with events very close to the Second Coming of Christ.

We can then look forward to an even richer and fuller fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel than what had taken place at Pentecost. But still, we can say that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was a fulfilment of Joel's prophecy as Peter had declared earlier in verse 16 and now reiterates:

Acts 2:22-23, 33

22 "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—

23 this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.

33 "Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear."

Ezekiel

The prophet Ezekiel, against the backdrop of Israel's failure, also prophesied of God giving us a new heart and a new spirit.

Ezekiel 36:26-27

26 "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

27 "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

In these two verses, God declares, "I *will* give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you" and "I *will* put My Spirit within you". Note the use of the word "will", signifying what God had promised was something yet to be; it was to be fulfilled in the future.

Verse 27 further gives us a main reason for God giving us the Holy Spirit—"cause you to walk in My statutes...to observe My ordinances". That is, the Holy Spirit will help God's people to walk in God's ways, to obey God's commandments and to be faithful to God.

Although this prophecy on the ministry of the Holy Spirit was addressed to the house of Israel (v. 22), it is clear from the New Testament that the spiritual realities described in this passage pertaining to the ministry of the Holy Spirit can be experienced by God's children under the New Covenant.

2. Christ announced the coming of the Holy Spirit

Besides the prophets in the Old Testament, the Lord Jesus also spoke of the Holy Spirit on several occasions. We see an instance of this in John 14.

John 14:16-17

16 "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever;

17 that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

Speaking of His impending death and departure from this earth, He assured His disciples that He would not leave them alone. He would give them another Helper, the Spirit of truth, who will abide with them and be in them. By saying that He would give them the Holy Spirit after His departure, it should not be understood as the Holy Spirit was not working in believers or in the world before the death of Christ, but rather that there is a difference in the way the Holy Spirit works in the New Covenant. In a more personal and distinctive manner than under the Old Covenant, the Holy Spirit will help us attain to what God desires for our lives; He is our Helper.

3. The Holy Spirit guides believers into all the truth

John 16:13

"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.

In these words, spoken just prior to the Cross, the Lord Jesus reveals to His disciples that the Holy Spirit will guide them into all the truth. This is something helpful for us to ponder over.

Do we recognise the importance of truth? Do we want to be guided into all the truth? If we want to, we must recognise the significance of the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives, which is to help us know and understand the truth and also experience the reality of the truth.

Truth in this context is not merely "what is". It has a positive moral and spiritual dimension, just as in 3 John 3 when the apostle John wrote that he was very glad when brethren testified to Gaius and his "walking in truth". It refers to that which is fitting and what ought to be from the perspective of God's kingdom. It is something that the God of truth desires to see in our innermost being (Ps. 51:6).

The Holy Spirit guiding us into all the truth is not merely referring to our recognising the truth, but includes the truth being formed in us and we living it out. The Holy Spirit will help us towards this end, that we may be men and women of truth, people who know the truth and walk in it. We will then become more and more like the Lord

Jesus, who is described by the apostle John as "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). In contrast, the Lord Jesus said of the evil one, "There is no truth in him" (John 8:44).

4. The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ

John 16:4

"He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you."

Here the Lord Jesus is speaking of the Holy Spirit, that He would glorify Christ. Do we want to glorify Christ in our lives? If we desire to, we must appreciate and experience the ministry of the Spirit in our lives in increasing measure.

There are different ways the Holy Spirit seeks to glorify Christ. One of the ways is to glorify Christ in us and through us. To experience this, we need to understand how we ought to live our lives in the Holy Spirit. This will have many implications for our lives, which I shall not elaborate at the moment.

5. The Holy Spirit empowers us to be witnesses

Luke 24:46-49

46 and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day,

47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

48 "You are witnesses of these things.

49 "And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

The above passage records what the Lord Jesus spoke about the coming of the Holy Spirit shortly before He ascended. In the preceding verses, the Lord Jesus explained to them from the Scriptures all things that were written about Him in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms (v. 44). Then, He told them that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed (v. 47). The good news is to be proclaimed to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem, that others may also come to the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus and enter into God's kingdom and be part of His family.

The Lord Jesus told His disciples, "You are witnesses of these things" (v. 48). It was their responsibility to proclaim the good news. But the Lord Jesus instructed them to wait until they were "clothed with power from on high" (v. 49). This is a crucial point. The disciples needed to be empowered by the Spirit so that they could fulfil the will of God, to serve Him and be effective witnesses of the Lord and to the truth.

Luke, who also wrote the Acts of the Apostles, continues the account in Acts 1:3-8.

Acts 1:3-8

3 To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.

4 Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me;

5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

6 So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?"

7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority;

8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

When the Lord Jesus rose again from the dead, He spent time with the disciples for a period of forty days, speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God. This is what was foremost in His heart—the kingdom of God. Yet He did not instruct His disciples to proclaim the gospel and reach out to others immediately. He told them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the baptism with the Holy Spirit (vs. 4-5).

In verse 8, He continued, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth". This was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost when the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and were empowered; they did become effective witnesses and servants of the Lord. We can read about this in the Book of Acts.

Being filled with or baptised with the Spirit is very important for believers to faithfully fulfil God's commandments and instructions, and be effective witnesses for the Lord.

How about us? Do we want to be effective witnesses of the Lord? Do we want to serve the Lord well? If we want to, and those who love the Lord should want to, then we must also be filled with the Spirit and be empowered by Him.

6. The Holy Spirit sanctifies believers

It is by the Holy Spirit that believers are being sanctified and enabled to develop morally and spiritually, moving towards the full salvation that God intends for His children.

Sadly, many of God's children remain babes in Christ and only taste a little of the salvation God intends for them. We must learn to move in the direction of full

salvation, and that can come about only through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit and through faith in the truth.

2 Thessalonians 2:13

But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.

This is a key verse in the Scriptures. It tells us that God's intention for us in salvation does not stop at conversion, but carries on through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. It is by the Holy Spirit that we are able to recognise the truth. He grants us insight into it and even helps us to exercise faith in the truth.

The sanctification of the believer by the Spirit is not an automatic process. We cannot be passive, but need to co-operate with the Spirit of God. But we also must recognise that there can be no sanctification without the work of the Holy Spirit. We cannot make progress in the process of sanctification by ourselves, by our own efforts. We therefore need to co-operate with what the Spirit of God is seeking to do in our lives, which involves the renewal of our minds and transformation of our hearts.

We need to ask ourselves: Are we being sanctified? Are we making good spiritual progress? If we are not, we know that it is because the Holy Spirit does not have the freedom to minister to us and to work deeply in our lives.

If we want to make good progress in sanctification, then we need to understand more of the ministry of the Holy Spirit and how we should order our lives so that the Spirit of God can have freedom to work deeply within us. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is vital to our growth, the transformation of our inner man and the development of our character.

The Fruit of the Spirit

Galatians 5:22-23 describes the outcome of a life transformed by the Holy Spirit as contrasted to one ruled by the flesh described in verses 19-21.

Galatians 5:22-23

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

This list detailing the fruit of the Spirit is by no means exhaustive. Paul is merely giving some examples of the major areas of the ministry of the Holy Spirit within us.

It is helpful to appreciate two aspects of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. One is that as we learn to order our lives and cooperate with the Lord, the Spirit of God will have greater freedom to work within us and we can then experience and manifest the fruit of the Spirit in our lives from time to time. Others will also be able to see expressions of the fruit of the Spirit as they come into contact with us and interact with us.

But we need to go beyond this to the second vital aspect because God's intention is not merely that we experience and manifest the fruit of the Spirit sporadically, but that our inner being, our character, is being transformed and the fruit of the Spirit becomes formed within us and becomes part of our character and our inner man in increasing measure and depth of quality.

We need to ask ourselves: To what degree is the fruit of the Spirit experienced as well as being formed within us? Is there love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control in our lives on a continuing basis? Are these qualities superficial or deep? Are they stable or easily shaken? Are we able to continue experiencing these realities even during trials, testing, sufferings, and difficulties of all sorts?

7. The Holy Spirit bears witness of Christ

The Lord Jesus says that the Holy Spirit has come to bear witness of Him (John 15:26). How does the Holy Spirit do it? One way is by working in the hearts and minds of those who have yet to know the Lord. He helps those who have been blinded by the god of this world by shining in their hearts to give them the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ (2 Cor. 4:6). He reveals in their hearts the truth of the gospel of Christ and helps them to appreciate who Christ is and what He has accomplished at the Cross on their behalf. Of course, for the non-believers to benefit from this provision, they have to respond positively to the witness of the Holy Spirit.

8. The Holy Spirit brings about conversion and regeneration

Besides witnessing in the hearts of the non-believers by helping them to recognise the truth of the gospel, the Holy Spirit also continues to work in their hearts up to the point of conversion or regeneration through repentance and faith in Christ. The Scriptures describes conversion or regeneration as being "born of the Spirit" (John 3:6).

This is a significant role of the Holy Spirit. He helps people to know the Lord and brings about their conversion and regeneration as they respond to His working in their hearts and minds.

We have already seen how the Holy Spirit continues to work beyond this, in the process of sanctification, growth, transformation of life and character and also empowering for service.

9. Believers experience the spiritual realities of God's kingdom in the Holy Spirit

Romans 14:17

for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Our experience of the realities of the kingdom of God in all its richness is in the Holy Spirit. It includes "righteousness and peace and joy *in the Holy Spirit*". But there are also other spiritual realities and blessings that God intends for us that we cannot experience apart from the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the role of the Holy Spirit is vital. If we long for a deeper experience of such spiritual riches, we need to experience in an increasing measure the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

10. Believers must worship in the Holy Spirit

A major aspect of life in the kingdom of God is learning to worship God in the Holy Spirit. Worshipping God is not a trivial or passive thing. It is a fundamental, deep reality that one can know in ever-deepening measure and with far-reaching implications. It is the foundation for proper and good relationship with God and for spiritual health. But sadly, many of God's children have not learned how to worship God with depth of meaning and reality. To truly worship God, we must learn what it means to worship Him in the Holy Spirit.

Philippians 3:3

for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.

In the preceding verse, Paul warns the Philippians of the dangers of evil workers and false teaching. He then directs them to the way of God—worshipping in the Spirit of God, glorying in Christ Jesus and not putting confidence in the flesh or works of the flesh, or worshipping God in the flesh. No, we must learn to worship in the Spirit of God.

Are we conscious of this truth in our personal time of worship and when we gather together for worship? Are we conscious of the fact that we need to worship in the Holy Spirit, looking to Him to guide us? Let us realise that if there is to be true meaning in our praying, singing or in the preaching of the word, there must be the dependence on the guidance, enabling and empowering of the Holy Spirit. All these are to be done in a spirit of worship, in fellowship with the Holy Spirit, in the Holy Spirit.

But worshipping in the Spirit is not only for times that we set apart for personal or corporate worship; our whole life should be an expression of the worship of God. This requires a constant dependence on the Spirit of God, walking according to the Spirit, according to His guidance and enabling and having a consciousness of drawing near to God in worship at all times.

The Lord Jesus told the Samaritan woman in John 4:23-24 that God is seeking for true worshippers. This is God's desire. But who are these true worshippers? They are those who worship God in spirit and in truth.

"In spirit" implies that we need to worship God in the realm of the spirit, from our spirit, in our spirit, in response to the Holy Spirit at work in our spirit and

worshipping God in the Holy Spirit. True worship is not merely nor primarily a mental, emotional or physical activity.

Just as in the expression “walking in truth” in 3 John 3, there is a positive moral and spiritual dimension in our heart when we worship God in truth, which renders true worship of value and meaning to God. “In truth” implies, among other things, that we look to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, to help us know the truth and to help us worship God and live out our lives in accordance to the truth thus revealed.

True worship is the appropriate positive moral and spiritual response from the heart and spirit of creature man towards the almighty, perfect creator God. It must be led and enabled by and in the Holy Spirit.

11. The Holy Spirit promotes praise, thanksgiving and mutual edification

The ministry of the Holy Spirit in our hearts gives rise to and draws us in the direction of praise, worship, thanksgiving and mutual edification in the truth. This can take place in our time together and also in our personal walk with God.

Ephesians 5:18-20

18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,

19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;

20 always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;

Paul urges us in verse 18 to “be filled with the Spirit”. This is immediately followed by a description of the outcome when one is filled with the Holy Spirit. Being filled with the Holy Spirit leads to “speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father” (vs. 19-20)

In the earlier verses, Paul exhorts the believers to “walk as children of Light”, “in all goodness and righteousness and truth” (vs. 8-9) and “to learn what is pleasing to the Lord” (v. 10). In verses 15-17, he further exhorts them to walk circumspectly because of the evil times they are in.

Ephesians 5:15-17

15 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise,

16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil.

17 So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Paul tells believers in verse 18 of the necessity to be filled with the Spirit in order for them to live out this positive direction.

Being filled with the Spirit is related to all these: how we can walk as children of Light, in all goodness and righteousness and truth; how to learn what is pleasing to

the Lord; how to walk carefully, not as unwise men but as wise; how to make the most of our time; how to understand what the will of the Lord is. And in that context, we learn to praise and worship God and edify one another in the body of Christ.

We need to ask ourselves: Does the Spirit of God have the freedom to work in our lives in these directions? Are we cooperating well with Him? Do we see the reality of the work of the Spirit within us, and is it being reflected in our priorities, our conduct, our goals and objectives in life?

Conclusion

As we ponder on this subject of the role and ministry of the Holy Spirit, it is helpful for us to recognise two points:

1. Whatever we can attain to and accomplish is by the grace of God and because of the death and the exaltation of Christ and the enabling of the Holy Spirit

From this springs forth our moral and spiritual development and our contribution to God's kingdom. Apart from the grace of God and the enabling of the Holy Spirit, there will not be true fruit in our own lives; neither will there be true fruit-bearing in service.

But let us be very clear that we need to respond well. Otherwise, we may receive God's grace in vain and grieve the Holy Spirit by our attitudes and ways.

God has very meaningful plans for our lives, for our well-being and also for our part in His kingdom. Let us not grieve the Holy Spirit by our negative attitudes and complacency, or by remaining in ignorance when we can have insight into the truth. Let us avail ourselves to all that God has provided for us.

2. The Holy Spirit brings to completion what has been in the heart of God on the basis of what has been accomplished at the Cross

This is one way of appreciating how the Holy Spirit seeks to glorify Christ. The work of the Holy Spirit and the death and exaltation of Christ are very closely linked. This is according to the will of God the Father who is watching over all that is taking place. We see from here the oneness of heart and purpose of the Triune God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. To fulfil the eternal purpose of God, Christ died and rose again on our behalf, and the Holy Spirit continues to bring to completion what has been in the heart of God on the basis of what has been accomplished at the Cross.

It is helpful for us to prayerfully ponder over God's intentions for us and what He has done and provided for us. In particular, let us realise that God has done and provided much for us in and through the Lord Jesus Christ and His death on the cross, resulting in His resurrection and exaltation, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

May we gain increasing insight into this vital reality: that the death and exaltation of Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit open the way for us to rise up to the

highest level of moral and spiritual stature and the possibility of deep fellowship with God and amongst the brethren and full and effective participation in the outworking and fulfilment of God's purposes.

Let us ask the Lord to help us appreciate in a deeper way these central truths that He has revealed in the Scriptures, and learn how to respond well to Him accordingly.

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