

"The New Covenant Economy of the Holy Spirit"

INTRO

The following preface is not original. I am not its author though I have modified its content when appropriate to not give it away. When I conclude this preface I will give you an opportunity to tell me who wrote it.

Pentecost: the law of the Spirit

The descent of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost Day is the definitive completion of the revelation of Jesus Christ and the full realization of the announcements of the Old Testament fathers, especially those of the Prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel, concerning a new, future covenant which God would establish with man in Christ and an "outpouring" of God's Spirit "on all mankind" (Joel 2:28).

Joe 2:28-32

"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. (29) Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit. (30) "And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. (31) The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. (32) And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls.

However, this also means a new inscription of God's law "in the depths" of man's "being", or, as the prophet says, in the "heart" (cf. Jer 31:33). Thus we have a "new law", or a "law of the Spirit", which we must now consider for a more complete understanding of the mystery of the Paraclete.

Jer 31:33-34

"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, (32) not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. (33) But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (34) And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

The Old Covenant between the Lord-God and the people of Israel was established by means of the theophany of Sinai, was based on the Law. At its centre we find the Decalogue. The Lord exhorts his people to observe the commandments:

"If you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to the a kingdom of priests and holy nation" (Ex 9:5-6).

Since that covenant had not been faithfully kept, God announces through the prophets that he will establish a new covenant:

"This is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts".

These words of Jeremiah, are joined to the promise:

"and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer 31:33).

The law of love for God and neighbor

Therefore the new (future) Covenant announced by the prophets was to be established by means of a radical change in man's relationship with God and his law. Instead of being an external rule, written on tablets of stone, the (new) Law was to become, thanks to the action of the Holy Spirit on man's heart, an interior guideline, established "in the depths of man's being".

According to the Gospel, this (new) Law is summarized in the commandment of love for God and neighbour.

When Jesus states that *"on these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets"* (Mt 22:40), he makes it clear that they are already contained in the Old Testament (cf. Deut 6:5; Lev 19:18).

- **Love for God** is *"the great and first commandment"*;
- **love for our neighbour** is *"the second (which) is like the first"* (Mt 22:37-39).

It is also a condition for observing the first:

"for he who loves his neighbour has fulfilled the law" (Rom 13:8).

The commandment of love for God and neighbour, the essence of the new Law established by Christ by word and example (even to giving "his life for his friends": cf. Jn 15: 13), is "written" in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. For this reason it becomes the *"law of the Spirit"*.

As the Apostle writes to the Corinthians:

"You show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts" (2 Cor 3:3).

Therefore the Law of the Spirit is man's interior imperative, rather, it is the same Holy Spirit who thus becomes man's teacher and guide in the depths of his heart.

1. A law thus understood is far removed from every form of external constraint to which man may be subjected in his actions. The law of the Gospel, contained in the word and confirmed by the life and death of Christ, consists in a divine revelation which includes the fullness of the truth about the good of human actions, and at the same time heals and perfects man's inner freedom, as Paul writes:

"The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom 8:2).

2. According to the Apostle, the Holy Spirit, who *"gives life"* because through him man's spirit shares in God's life, becomes at the same time the new principle and source of man's activity:

"in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Rom 8:4).

3. In this teaching Paul would have been able to appeal to Jesus himself, who in the Sermon on the Mount had pointed out:

"Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Mt 5:17).

Precisely such a fulfillment of God's Law by Jesus Christ through, word and example, serves as the model of *"walking according to the Spirit"*. In this sense, the law of the Spirit, written by him *"on tablets of human hearts"*, exists and operates in those who believe in Christ and share in his Spirit.

As we see from the Acts of the Apostles, the whole life of the primitive Church is a grand demonstration of the truth expressed by Paul, according to whom:

"God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom 5:5).

In spite of the limitations and defects of its members, the community of Jerusalem shared in the new life which *"is given by the Spirit"*; it lives out of God's love. We also have received this life as a gift from the Holy Spirit, who fills us with love—love for God and neighbor—the essential content of the greatest commandment. For this reason, the new Law, inscribed on human hearts by love as a gift of the Holy Spirit, is the law of the Spirit within them. It is the law which gives freedom, as Paul writes:

"The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom 8:2).

The beginning of a new morality

1. For this reason, Pentecost, in so far as it is *"the pouring into our hearts"* of God's love (cf. Rom 5:5), marks the beginning of a new human morality, based on the *"law of the Spirit"*. This morality is more than mere observance of the law dictated by reason or by Revelation itself. It derives from, and at the same time reaches, something more profound. It derives from the Holy Spirit and makes it possible to live in a love which comes from God; it becomes a reality in our lives by *having (mb)* been poured into our hearts".

The Apostle Paul was (perhaps) the greatest proclaimer of this higher morality, rooted in *"the law of the Spirit"*. He who had been a zealous pharisee, an expert, a meticulous observer and a fanatical defender of the *"letter of the Old Law,"* and who later became an apostle of Christ, could write about himself:

"God... who has qualified us to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit; for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life" (2 Cor 3 6).

(Original Heading)

"The Holy Father (John Paul the 2nd) continued his series of reflections on Pentecost during the general audience on Wednesday, 9 August."

Now that you who know is credited with the above message let me add that I believe the late pope had enlisted the services of a ghost writer and that I suspect the original author to be one P. Raniero Cantalamessa who was the preacher to the late pope during the Lenten season.

- Moe

At first the following outline was not intended to provide for the structure for the three oral messages that I gave at the 2008 New York conference. When all was said and done we were thankful for God's provision.

"The New Covenant Economy of the Holy Spirit"

Opening comments for the reader.

When our brothers and sisters sit down at the Table of Remembrance where you gather do they truly know something of this New Covenant sealed by the blood of Jesus Christ? The vast majority are ignorant of passages such as Isaiah 42:6 and 49:8 and they are terribly ignorant of 2 Cor 3 with its Letter Spirit contrast. Let us give proper, prayerful attendance, to this subject.

As many of you know there is within certain Reformed Baptist circles a continuing theological discussion focusing on a greater understanding of the New Covenant of Christ. Within the larger discussion is to be found dialog over the role of Old Covenant Law. The participants can be said to have a single objective and it is to answer this one question: What role does the Mosaic Law play in the life of the New Covenant saint? The answer to this question has evaded even the most erudite theologians alive today. Partial continuity or a radical discontinuity of the Mosaic Law remains the chief focus of those engaged in this dialog.

There is little disagreement if we say we are persuaded all of the Holy Scriptures, both old and new (2Ti 3:16-17), have a continuing role to play in the New Covenant era. Disagreement enters when we question what specific laws of the Old Testament scriptures, and in particular those of the Mosaic Covenant, remain binding on the conscience of the New Covenant saint. (Rom 6:14, Gal 3:10) Those involved in this discussion know all too well how the question continues to seek the elusive answer.

We are convinced the issues of law and grace as set before today's community of believers were not in any sense as problematic to the early church as it is today. (Gal 3:3) When Paul addressed issues of Law and Grace, Old and New Covenants, as he did in his letter to the churches in Rome and Galatia, he had no need to speak in terms that required his readers to own degrees that qualified them as doctors of the law. (Rom 8:3-4) The recipients of his letters were ordinary believers who more or less enjoyed some familiarity with the issues as presented. (Rom 1:7; Gal 1:2)

In the early years of the church the two major covenants were revealed by the Scriptures as the Sinai Covenant and as the New Covenant of Christ through His Spirit. They were not defined by some theological system that arrived upon the scene hundreds of years later. (Gal 4:21-31) We believe the Scriptures continue to serve the people of God now just as they did in the earliest days of the church. If we would but hear them! (Heb 4:10,11)

The development of the two major theological systems is an expression of a common desire to hear God. As those who would consider the development of a third system we need to ask, "What saith the Lord?" We want to know His mind in this matter. It is our belief that all involved in this growing discussion are sincerely seeking to know the mind of God. As observers and participants of the ongoing dialog we have come to the conclusion that a new paradigm or a revision is needed in our approach to the issues of:

1. continuity and discontinuity
2. law and grace.

We are going to go out on a limb to seriously suggest that the theologians among us may be asking the wrong question. The question as it is framed today (**What OT laws have application within the New Covenant?**) serves the interest of those critics who espouse the use of the Mosaic Law for Sanctification. We believe there is a much better (and correct) question to submit to the New Covenant community and it is derived from the following passage taken from Paul's first letter to the saints of Corinth.

Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. 2Co 3:5-6 ESV

For clarity we will divide our passage in this manner:

1. Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us,
2. but our sufficiency is from God,
3. (God) who has made us competent
4. (competent) to be ministers of a new covenant,
5. **not of the letter**
6. **but of the Spirit.**
7. For the letter kills,
8. but the Spirit gives life.

There we have it! The Spirit of God has set forth in this Word the formulation for understanding *much more* than just how the two covenants relate to one another as written word. The Spirit of God has accurately defined the substance of the two covenants as they are to be understood by all.

Here is the all important contrast:

- The first covenant consists of the **LETTER**
- and the second consists of the **SPIRIT**.

To our shame it is this God given contrast and its substance that remains missing in our ongoing dialog for within **the contrast of LETTER and SPIRIT is the answer** to our critics though it is much more than the formulation of a simple reply. Here resides a right understanding of the two major covenants. It's God's understanding of the covenants and it is dynamite!

The seasoned among us know that up until now the growing New Covenant Theology community has contributed endless propaganda (both profitable and less so) towards the continuing relevance of the LETTER. The LETTER COVENANT is external and by itself is powerless to cut or change the hearts of its hearers and readers. Unlike the LETTER COVENANT the SPIRIT COVENANT accomplishes what the LETTER COVENANT could not do. The SPIRIT COVENANT gives life and empowerment.

The LETTER COVENANT kills. The SPIRIT COVENANT gives life.

Now let us consider some of the ramifications. There is another question we must consider.

Of what covenant are you a minister? The LETTER or the SPIRIT?

The question is for those of our number who (at least theoretically) do nothing more than debate the usefulness of the LETTER covenant while never giving serious consideration to the SPIRIT covenant. We need to ask ourselves why this is so? Is it too mystical for us to handle? If New Covenant Theology fails at this point then it is not Christ centered Biblical Theology.

Hear Him!

Rom 8:2-17 ESV ***For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.*** (3) *For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,* (4) *in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be **fulfilled in us**, who walk not according to the flesh but **according to the Spirit.*** (5) *For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.* (6) *To set the mind on the flesh is death, **but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.*** (7) *For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.* (8) *Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.* (9) ***You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you.*** *Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.* (10) ***But if Christ is in you,*** *although the body is dead because of sin, **the Spirit is life** because of righteousness.* (11) ***If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you,*** *he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.* (12) *So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.* (13) *For if you live according to the flesh you will die, **but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*** (14) *For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.* (15) *For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"* (16) *The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,* (17) *and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.*

Let us move on now and give our attention to the importance of the Holy Spirit within his New Covenant.

References to the Work of the Spirit in the New Testament

The word *pneuma* (Spirit) occurs 381 times in the N.T. In approximately 120 cases the reference is to an evil spirit or to the human spirit. (In some cases it is difficult to tell if the reference is to the human spirit or to the Holy Spirit.)

Initial coming of the Spirit

There are *four* references to the Spirit coming on Christ, and *twenty-seven* that refer to the initial outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost or related subsequent outpourings on the Samaritans, Saul, the Gentiles and the Ephesian twelve.

In every case the individual is already a believer, and in all cases but one they have been baptized.

The work of the Spirit related to evangelism or defence of the faith

There are *twelve* references. Often the Spirit is related to boldness, such as in Acts 4:8, “*Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, ‘Rulers of the people and elders of Israel...’*”

The disciples, Peter, Paul and the gathered believers are all described as being *filled* with the Spirit as they spoke.

Revelation or reception of the truth of God

There are *twelve* references. Most commonly these refer to the communication of truth to the Apostles, or bringing to remembrance (John 14:25-26) but there is also the important idea of the need for the Spirit in the *reception* of truth, taught in 1 Corinthians 2.

Specific Gifts of the Spirit (mostly supernatural)

This is the largest category, with over *sixty* references.

The gift most commonly mentioned is that of *prophecy*. There are a number of examples in Acts and Revelation together with instructions for its usage and testing in the Epistles.

In several cases *pneuma* is associated with a *list* of gifts.

Leading of the Spirit

There are *seventeen* occasions where the Spirit is described as leading, permitting, forbidding, saying, telling, or some such verb. In almost all cases, the directions have reference to the spreading of the gospel, for example in Acts, Peter is told to go to the house of Cornelius (10:19; 11:2) and Paul is forbidden to preach in Asia (16:6,7).

Non-specific supernatural power

There are *ten* references. In virtually every case the supernatural power (*dunamis*) is the testimony of the Spirit as a *witness* to the truth of the gospel.

Regeneration

In *twenty* places, the work of the Spirit is associated with the *new birth*, with *circumcising the heart*, or with giving *life*. Since this category is so important to our understanding of the work of the Spirit in the life of the Christian, it will be discussed again later.

Indwelling

Seven passages in the N.T. refer to this concept, with *twelve* actual statements of the Spirit indwelling the believer. One of the most important passages is John 14:15-24 where Jesus describes the coming “helper” and goes on to include the indwelling of the Father and Son. There are also two references in 1 John.

The second important passage is the discussion in Romans 8:1-11 which is vital to our subject since it links indwelling to our ethical response.

New fruit-bearing life in the Spirit

This is the second largest category with approximately *fifty-eight* references. Positively, words that describe the blessings of the Spirit include, comfort, joy, love, help, peace, liberty, communion, fellowship, strengthening, and particularly unity. In addition there is the list of fruits

in Galatians 5:22-23, *“love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”* The Spirit also assists us with our prayer life.

Negatively, the Spirit is described as locked in a conflict with the flesh (Rom 8:1-17; Gal 5:16–6:1) and providing the power to defeat indwelling sin where the law has failed to do so.

Eschatological hope for the future

There are *five* references, all in Paul, which speak of the Spirit in terms of sealing, guarantee, promise, firstfruits, and eagerly waiting for the consummation of our redemption.

General Filling

In *six* places, believers are described as being filled with the Holy Spirit without any manifestation being associated. The seven men chosen in Acts 6 are described as “full of the Holy Spirit”, particularly Stephen who is described twice as such. Barnabas was “full of the Holy Spirit and of faith” (Acts 11:24) and the Ephesian believers were exhorted to “be filled with the Spirit” (5:18). Peter tells us that when we are persecuted, “the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you” (4:14).

The Spirit’s Work of Grace in the Believer

The Old Covenant Believer

In the O.T. regeneration, or the “new birth” is pictured as circumcision of the heart:

[Old Testament believers] did not have to guess what circumcision symbolized because God told them many times. For example, in Ezekiel 36:26, God says to them *“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.”* He goes on to explain in v. 27: *“I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you will keep my judgments and do them.”*

So Ezekiel equates this circumcised heart to having the Spirit within us. God will put his Spirit within us. This idea of an obedient, regenerated heart is even clearer when we look at Romans 2:25. Paul explains: *“For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.”*

The Continuing Importance of God’s Word

Since faith involves knowledge, it ordinarily emerges in relationship to the teaching of the gospel found in Scripture. Regeneration and the faith to which it gives birth are seen as taking place not by revelationless divine sovereignty, but within the matrix of the preaching of the word and the witness of the people of God. (*cf.* Rom 10:1-15). Their instrumentality in regeneration does not impinge upon the sovereign activity of the Spirit. Word and Spirit belong together.

This idea is powerfully summarized in Christ’s words: *“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life”* (John 6:63).

The New Covenant Believer

Does this mean that there is nothing distinctly new about the work of the Spirit in regeneration in the N.T.? In some ways there is nothing new. What then about the prophecies?

“Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh” Ezek 11:19.

“And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they have pierced; they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn” Zech 12:10.

God had saved many people and given them new hearts back in those days. What is new is as follows:

- The *massive scale* of the outpouring of salvation—there would no longer be a small remnant saved. The Gentiles would be included.
- There would be a new (spiritual) nation of Israel in which every single person would be *regenerate*, (just as all of the old Israel were circumcised).
- Every believer would be *indwelt by the Spirit* (Ezek 36:27) such that they could be led by him, and make independent judgments about truth, and not be reliant on a priesthood to interpret the Scriptures (Jer 31:33-34).
- Whereas in the O.T. a few leaders would be given gifts of the Spirit, *every single member* of the new people of God would possess a gift for the building up of the body.
- All this would be regulated by a new covenant.

So in summary, the nature of the work of the Spirit in regeneration has not changed in the New Covenant, what has changed is the quantitative *scale* of the work, and the nature of the covenant which we are regenerated *into*.

New Life in the Spirit

As mentioned above, there is no direct connection in the N.T. between the new creation and the Spirit. However, there is a close connection between Christ’s resurrection and our new life, and Christ is said to be raised from the dead by the power of the Spirit. In Ephesians 1:19-20 Paul says: *“and what is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his mighty power which he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places.”* Since power almost always has reference to the Spirit in the N.T., Paul is saying that the same power of the Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead is available in our lives and has *“made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus”* (Eph 2:5-6).

The same connection is made in Colossians 2:12-13:

“buried with him in baptism, in which you also were raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, he has made alive together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.”

Paul makes the application a few verses later, *“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God”* (Col 3:1).

Creator and created

It is vital to distinguish between the Creator and the created. We are indwelt by the Spirit but we do not become the Spirit. He is renewing us into the *image* of Christ, but we do not become divine.

Failure to appreciate this distinction leads to two opposite errors. In some Keswick and Charismatic/Holiness traditions, there is an effective denial of any possibility of change in us. There is never anything good in us in ourselves. We cry “more of Christ and less of me” by which we mean that the only good thing about a Christian is Christ who indwells by the Spirit. The “self” cannot improve in any way. Increase in godliness consists therefore in “letting go and letting God.” The concept of spiritual transformation and renewal in the Christian life is absent.

In many cases this teaching is a reaction against a self-sufficient Christianity that denies the need for a moment by moment dependence on the power of God. It would be wrong to suggest that even the most mature and Christ-like Christian could survive for a moment without the power of the Spirit. Although we are being transformed, we are not being transformed into independence, but into increasing dependence.

The opposite error occurs in many traditions including some recent strands of Reformed teaching. The emphasis is entirely on transformation. The Spirit is hidden in the background, providing a source of power to enable us to transform ourselves. He is relegated to being a force, not a person with whom we can have fellowship, who comforts, encourages and leads us.

The New Creation

These two aspects of the Spirit’s work, as indweller and as new creator, are usually distinct in the N.T. Romans 6–8 is particularly valuable because it is one of the few places where they are explicitly related together.

To summarize Paul’s argument in these chapters, union with Christ in his death and resurrection is the definitive basis for our new life. *“Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life”* (Rom 6:4). Our participation in Christ’s death has severed the power of sin in our lives. Our participation in his resurrection has transported us into a new kind of existence—the new man who lives in the realm of the Spirit.

Romans 8:9 tells us that in the new covenant the Spirit indwells *all* believers. *“But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not his.”* His indwelling results in power for our future resurrection, *“But if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you”* (v.11), and power for the battle against sin, *“For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live”* (v.13). This presence enables us to live “according to the Spirit” and to set our minds on the Spirit.

The new creation is a new kind of man, a new order of existence. Christ was raised in the power of the Spirit as the firstborn of this new creation (Col 1:18). Even though we do not yet have new bodies, our spirits live in that new realm which is opposed to the flesh.

Power for the new life

The law is good, but it is utterly without power to change us (Rom 7:7-24; Gal 5:18-23). It is the presence of the personally indwelling Spirit that allows us to “*put to death the deeds of the body*”. At the root of our transformation is a renewal of our minds (Rom 12:1). Yet in order for this to begin, we must have a new mind that is spiritual rather than fleshly.

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” 1 Cor 2:12-14.

The Gift of the indwelling Spirit

Ordo Salutis (the order of salvation)

Here we encounter one of the difficulties mentioned above. The indwelling Spirit is always spoken of as a *gift* that is given *after* belief. Below is a selection of Scriptures which suggest such a sequence.

John 7:39 But this he spoke concerning the Spirit, whom *those believing in him* would receive;

John 14:15-17 “If you love me, *keep my commandments*. And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another helper, that he may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth.”

John 14:21 “And *he who loves me* will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.”

John 14:23 “*If anyone loves me, he will keep my word*; and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”

Acts 2:38 “*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized* in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 5:32 “And we are his witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to *those who obey him*.”

Acts 19:2 he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit *when you believed?*”

Gal 3:14 that we might receive the promise of the Spirit *through faith*.

Gal 3:2 Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or *by the hearing of faith?*

Gal 4:6 And *because you are sons*, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!”

Eph 1:13 In him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; *in whom also, having believed*, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.

It might be argued that the first four references from John are prior to Pentecost and so the sequence is historical and not soteriological. However the three references in Acts specify an

unambiguous sequence of the gift following repentance/faith. The two references in Galatians 3 support this idea, as does Ephesians 1:13.

How can this be squared with the testimony of the Scriptures that man without the Spirit is spiritually dead. *“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life”* John 6:63. Faith and repentance are the work of the Spirit, so how can they be conditional for the giving of the Spirit?

We believe that the answer is found in the previous discussion of the need to separate the New Creator himself from his creative work. His act of regenerating us is *not* the same as his gift of indwelling. How can it be! Indwelling, in the sense spoken of by Jesus (John 7:39; 14:15-26; 15:26; 16:7-14, also Gal 3:14; 2 Cor 3:6-8) did not occur until Pentecost, yet many were born again before that time.

Note here that we are proposing a logical distinction, not a temporal one. At this point the classical Pentecostal will want to make indwelling a second work of grace, subsequent to conversion. However, the words of Paul in Romans 8:9 totally rule out that possibility for the post-Pentecost situation. Just as in the classical reformed *ordo salutis*, the immediate response of the regenerate individual is to exercise faith in Jesus Christ, so the immediate response of God to that faith is to apply to us the benefits of salvation including justification and the gift of the Spirit.

Just as regeneration is logically prior to faith, but it is not possible to find a regenerate person who does not have faith, in the same way faith and repentance are logically prior to the gift of the indwelling Spirit. Since the gift of the Spirit follows immediately from faith and repentance, all true Christians have this indwelling.

The Spirit of the risen Christ

O.T. believers could not be indwelt by the Holy Spirit in the same way as after Pentecost, but there is another difference. We now experience him as *“the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead”* Rom 8:11. The victory that Christ won on the cross has made a radical change in our experience of the Spirit. The power of *his* resurrection is now available to *us*. The decisive victory has been won.

Christ’s own experience of the Spirit led him into conflict, persecution and death. Although these aspects are equally present in the pathway in which the Spirit would lead us, there is the new dimension of joy and victory which Christ only looked forward to. Paul prays that:

“the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of his calling, what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his mighty power which he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated Him at his right hand in the heavenly places.” (Eph 1:18-20)

The wonder of the Gift

Repeated time and time again in the N.T. is the statement that the Spirit is a *gift*. The impact of this image can be lost on us through familiarity. It is good to take some time to meditate on what this means. He is given as a love-gift, *“the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the*

Holy Spirit who was given to us” Rom 5:5. We can get focused on the *gifts* of the Spirit and forget that the greatest gift is the Spirit himself.

If we could ask the Father for any present we wanted, anything at all, what better present could we possibly ask for than for he himself to be our possession. What better gift than that the Divine should take up residence in our being, and make his power available to us—not only his power, but also his intimate fellowship. This indeed is a foretaste of heaven. This is a reversal of the Fall where Adam and Eve were cast out of direct fellowship with God.

We cannot separate our experience of the Spirit from Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit the Spirit of Christ. Our fellowship is not merely with the Spirit but with the whole Godhead through the Spirit. As Jesus said, *“If anyone loves me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him”* (John 14:23).

We can lose the sense of wonder at the generosity of this gift. Through lack of appreciation we can fail to enjoy the benefits of this level of intimacy with God that O.T. saints could never have enjoyed. This is the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry Abba Father! (Rom 8:15).

Repeated filling

If every Christian has the Spirit, how can we be commanded to be filled with the Spirit? As mentioned earlier, a number of individuals in the N.T. were described as being “filled with the Spirit.” Paul tells the Ephesian believers to “be filled [continually] with the Spirit” (5:18). Peter and Paul are both on occasion described as being filled with the Holy Spirit, long after their initial baptism in the Spirit.

We can only conclude from this that we need to seek an ongoing filling. When circumstances arise that cause us to cast ourselves on the Lord, we may receive a special measure of grace and power. Those men and women who have been especially used in God’s service in the history of the Christian church, have often experienced one or more occasions where they had a special experience of the power of God, which had a transforming effect on their ministry. This should not be considered a “second blessing,” but an ongoing series of blessings and re-fillings. How are we to obtain this filling? It is a gift for which we are invited to ask: *“If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”* (Luke 11:13).

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Many thanks to Dr. Andrew Fountain who did permit me the use of a well prepared outline on such short notice. I am also indebted to countless other students of God’s Holy Word throughout the church age who have contributed much to my understanding of the great work of God’s Holy Spirit in this precious New Covenant of Jesus Christ. When all is said and done this was a team effort. Thank you all for your prayers and love! Love in Christ! – Moe Bergeron