

Foundations of the Spiritual Life (3) Continued

The Correct Vision

A. Correct vision of God

IV. The Person of the Holy Spirit

Readings:

- **John 14: 21, 23**

'He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him...Jesus answered and said to him, "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 15: 26, 27**

'But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.'

- **1Corinthians 3: 16, 17**

'Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.'

- **1Corinthians 2: 10 – 13**

'But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things

of God except the Spirit of God. 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.'

- **1Corinthians 6: 19**

'Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?'

- **1Corinthians Chapters 12 - 14**

- **2Corinthians 13: 14**

'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.'

- **1John 1: 3**

'That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.'

- **1John 5: 6 - 8**

'This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.'

Summary of the main points we covered so far in this series:

Before moving on to talk about the Person of the Holy Spirit, I want to remind you of the context and main points we have mentioned in this series.

We have been discussing the main foundations of following Christ. The first point was about counting the cost. We highlighted that our inner spiritual man is in need of spiritual food or fuel to grow, to move on. The spiritual food or fuel is the grace that comes from the throne of God as a '*grace upon grace*' (John 1: 16 -ESV). This grace is not an abstract but an actual specific gift that has a measure. It is written: '*God has dealt to each one a measure of faith*' (Romans 12: 3). Every child eats a certain measure or portion of food and as he grows, this portion increases. Similarly, the inner spiritual man has to nourish on spiritual food; otherwise, he will remain small and limited.

The problem which we often face in our ministry and in our life is that our inner man is not growing. In order for it to grow, it needs food; this food is called '*grace*'. This grace comes as divine gifts from God. The general name for it is '*grace*'; yet, this grace can come in various forms like: faith, power, peace, forgiveness and freedom from a guilty conscience, purification and cleansing of the inner corruption of the soul, or any other form according to the need. This is similar to the outer physical flesh that needs protein, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals, and so on. If this physical body just takes carbohydrates or sugary products or any one product without the other nutritional elements, it may contract an illness or suffer nutritional deficiency. Exactly as it is important for food to be varied and have all the nutritional elements, the spiritual food needs to be varied and include different elements if we desire our inner man to grow.

Therefore, we need these gifts which God is always ready to grant to us according to our need. These gifts are transferred to us through the Person of the Holy Spirit, from the Father, through the work of the Son.

We need the gifts of God, the Father who is our Father and who looks after us. We need the gifts of the Son, the gifts of redemption that will change our corrupt and fallen nature. We need to prepare room and place for these gifts or graces and this preparation requires a cost.

To sum up, if we want to truly follow Christ, our inner man needs to be changed and this is achieved through the spiritual food which we should seek, prepare a place for, and eat. This preparation involves a cost. The Holy Spirit will continually draw our attention to the cost required. For example, He would say: *'let go of such and such matter because it hinders you and binds you'*.

The second point we discussed was about the heart. The heart is the centre of the spiritual life. Therefore, it is written: *'My son, give me your heart'* (Proverbs 23: 26). It is one's responsibility to let his heart take a certain direction and not remain undetermined. One needs to decide either to follow Christ always and totally or to live in the world. It is not possible to falter between two opinions¹. Every time I find my heart faltering or wanting to go astray or is being deceitful, once with Christ and once in the world, I need to restore it to the one direction that I have chosen. I should watch over my heart making sure that it is undivided and is taking one specific direction which is to follow Christ.

We are revising these points again and again because they are important foundations for our spiritual building. If a building has solid foundations, this building would be strong and can go higher in levels; yet, if the building

¹ 1 Kings.18:21

has weak foundations, the building itself will be weak and may collapse; it will also be impossible to make it go higher. The same applies to our spiritual life. If our foundations are correct and strong, we can have an inner spiritual building that would continue to grow and go to higher levels.

The third point that we discussed in this respect was about the correct vision. This includes having a correct vision of God, of myself, and of my enemy.

The first sub point in this respect is my vision of God. The more I see God in a correct way, the more I can be transformed because I am being transformed into the image of God. Therefore, if my vision of God is distorted, my transformation will be hindered and marred; however, if this vision is correct, my transformation will be true, perfected, and moving forward.

We highlighted that God is a Trinity. Then we spoke about the Person of the Father and the Person of the Son and today we will talk about the Person of the Holy Spirit.

Main message: The Person of the Holy Spirit

'This Jesus God raised up, of which we all are witnesses. Therefore, having been exalted to the right hand of God and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, he has poured out this that you see and hear'
(Acts 2: 32, 33).

This was on the day of Pentecost.

The Holy Spirit is the great and amazing gift that the Father has granted us.

We can easily form an image in our mind of God, the Father because we usually link this to our understanding of the earthly father.

We also easily form an image of the Son because we read about Jesus a lot in the gospels and there are many icons and pictures of Him.

However, it may not be easy for us to form an image of the Person of the Holy Spirit. We often think of Him as a power or a Spirit that is unseen.

It is true that He is a power; yet, He is also a Person. Each hypostasis in the Trinity is a Person who has a distinct role; at the same time, they are in each other and they are in unity as One God.

Therefore, the Holy Spirit is a Person of the Trinity. He has been granted to us as a gift from the Father in order to walk with us. He is called the *'Paraclete'* which means that He walks by my side and He defends me against the adversary. He also dwells in me. Therefore He is in me and beside me. He wants to hold my hand and walk with me because I do not know the way well and also because I will face enemies on my journey.

The Psalmist wrote: *'lead me, O Lord, in Your righteousness because of my enemies; make Your way straight before my face'* (Psalm 5: 8).

It is clear in the bible that whoever walks in the way of God faces enemies who want to hinder him. These enemies are the devil and his evil powers.

In Romans 8: 26 we read:

'Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

According to the Greek origin, the word used here to describe the work of Holy Spirit: *'helps in our weaknesses'* means that He holds my hands and walks with me despite the resistance of the enemy which wants to hinder

my walk. He pushes away the enemy and opens the way for me. Thus, I can move forward.

The devil tries to hinder any steps taken in any true spiritual life where there is inner spiritual growth and a true move towards the divine purposes. However, the Holy Spirit comes to strengthen me and give me power and He also pushes the enemies out of my way.

When St Macarius, the Great, visited St Anthony, the Great, and asked to stay with him and be his spiritual disciple, St Anthony told him that a different place has been appointed to him where he will have many disciples and therefore he needs to go back to his place. St Macarius was coming from the desert of '*Shi-het*' (in the west); while St Anthony was in the eastern mountain. But before sending him away, St Anthony taught St Macarius '*the spiritual battles*' i.e. how to battle with the enemy, the means of dealing with and conquering in the spiritual battles. This was the major thing that he needed to learn at that point of his monastic life. It is important to learn these battles and how to deal with them because this is one of the hindrances in the way of following Christ. Therefore, I mentioned earlier that one of the important foundations in following Christ is to have a correct vision of my enemy and learn his strategies and how to overcome him.

The Holy Spirit is the One who helps me in the battles of the enemy. We should have a true fellowship with the Holy Spirit because He helps us in everything.

The topic of the Holy Spirit is vast. To simplify matters, I will discuss this topic through 5 main headings:

1. The Holy Spirit and the fellowship with God
2. The Holy Spirit and the world
3. The Holy Spirit and the Church
4. The Holy Spirit and the individual person
5. The Holy Spirit and ministry

1. The Holy Spirit and the fellowship with God

If our prayer life is weak and unfruitful, this will not lead us to an ever-increasing knowledge of God. As a result, we will fail to know God as our Father and we will fail to know the Son as our Redeemer, Lord, and mighty Saviour. However, the commandment says: *'grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ'* (2Peter 3: 18).

If we do not grow in knowing Him, we will not be able to move forward steadily, bearing a living message to the people. This is simply because we do not know God whom we are talking about. We will just repeat some words that we have memorised.

However, if we know Him and discover more and more who He is, He will fill our hearts, we will delight in our fellowship with Him, He will stir our spirits and fill our mouths with a true message. Therefore, when we open our mouths to speak about Him, we will not be able to stop talking about Jesus, the Living Lord who is risen from the dead and who has conquered death.

In Romans 8: 16 we read: *'The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God'*.

This is not something that I know in my mind, but the Holy Spirit bears witness to my spirit that I am a child of God and that God is my Father. He is the true Father and His Fatherhood is perfect. He cares for me with great love and tenderness. The Holy Spirit is the One who stirs my heart and opens my eyes to know my heavenly Father. This cannot be known through words or just understood by the mind.

Through a divine inner work, the Holy Spirit reveals to us the Person of the Father who is full of love, tenderness, compassion, and mercy. As a result, we rest in Him and feel secure in Him. We know that we have a mighty, watchful and faithful Father; therefore, nothing in our lives can happen at random or adversely affect us. Neither people nor evil powers can control our life. We are not left or handed over to circumstances, no matter how difficult circumstances may seem. We often fail to know this due to our lack of knowledge of the Fatherhood of God, His might and His faithfulness. The enemy tries to hide this from our minds and eyes; as a result, we become ignorant of the Father and fail to enjoy His gifts.

It is written that the heavenly Father grants good gifts to His children: *'Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change'* (James 1: 17).

There are new gifts for us every day. It is written: *'The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning'* (Lamentations 3: 22, 23). He grants us true good gifts according to our need.

If we know and trust our heavenly Father, we will learn –through the work of the Holy Spirit –to *‘ask of God who gives to all liberally and without reproach’* (James 1: 5). We will ask and we will receive; and we will continue to ask more and receive more. We will then know that this is an unsearchable mystery. Our inner spiritual being can be dull or weak not knowing that we have a heavenly Father. Yet, if we come to know and experience this, it will transform our lives. The Holy Spirit helps us know the Father. He bears witness to our spirits that we are the children of God. He keeps reminding our hearts that we are the children of God, our Father, who is close to us and who prepares for us good gifts.

The Holy Spirit also reveals to us and proclaims the Lordship of Jesus. In 1Corinthians 12: 3, it is written: *‘no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit’*.

The Holy Spirit shapes my inner being according to the image of the Son, *‘to be conformed to the image of His Son’* (Romans 8: 29). Jesus comes to our hearts; He grows in us and continues to be formed in us until we become conformed to His image, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

As a result, Jesus becomes Lord over my life. The more He becomes Lord over my life, the more I desire to do His will wholeheartedly and His will becomes my delight. He does not take away my freedom; He only takes away the fake freedom which destroys me and grants me the true freedom that gives me honour and dignity. The Prodigal son used his freedom in a way that destroyed him. Each one of us has freedom/free will; yet, part of it is poisonous and one has to leave this part out of his free will in order to be protected from the enemies and evil powers.

When we use the kind of freedom which is egoistic, earthy, sensual, and demonic (James 3: 15), we fall into the traps of the enemy and get destroyed. When I use this false freedom, the Holy Spirit tells me to leave it and let go of it because it does not please my Lord, the Captain of my ship, Jesus, whose Lordship truly liberates and frees.

Any master enslaves; yet, Jesus is the only Master who liberates. Any master dominates; yet Jesus is the Master who honours. Jesus told His disciples: *'No longer do I call you servants...but I have called you friends'* (John 15: 15).

The Holy Spirit helps me know and enjoy Jesus as a Lord over my life. He helps in allowing the Person of Jesus to grow in me, shaping my inner being to be conformed to the image of Christ.

At the end, each one of us will have a Christ in him, in unique and manifold ways: a Christ full of joy, a Christ full of peace, a Christ full of meekness, and so on. All these attributes are in Christ; He has the fullness of the manifold attributes; but, each one of us receives a different attribute of Christ. We will thus look royal, the children of the King; each one of us is a prince, bearing the image of God, the image of His Son.

The Son is the image of God who came to our world to help us see and know God, the Father. When Christ is formed in us, the world around us will be able to see and know who Jesus is. We will not be talking about Jesus using mere words that bear no life; but, our message will be a living testimony seen in our lives and on our faces.

Therefore, exactly as Jesus came to make known to us the Father so that we may love Him and seek Him, we also should do the same by being *'christs'* when Christ is formed in us so that the world may know and see who Jesus

is and they start to seek Him and love Him because He is the Only way through whom people may know God.

Jesus said: *'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me'* (John 14: 6).

Also, in Acts 4: 12 it is written: *'for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved'*.

2. The Holy Spirit and the world

We live in a world that currently lies in the power of the evil one (1John 5: 19 -ESV). It is true that the devil is defeated and has been conquered; yet, the full sentence of his defeat will be executed in the Last Day.

The devil cannot control the life of those who know that he is defeated; while he deceives those, who do not know.

The devil is the prince of this world. Jesus said: *'the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me'* (John 14: 30). Each one of us can say the same if Jesus is in us.

I live in the world and the devil is the ruler/prince of this world; yet, he has nothing to do with me, my area and my ways; he has nothing in me. He temporarily has the world; yet, he has limitations. He has everything except those the bible calls *'the Redeemed'* and describes them as those *'with everlasting joy on their heads'* (Isaiah 35: 10) and before whom the Sea was parted making a path for them to cross. This means that the devil cannot hinder them for even the sea becomes a path. He cannot sadden them because they have everlasting joy on their heads; this everlasting joy casts away the distress and sadness of the world. They are salt; wherever they

go, they preserve and purify. This is because the devil has no place in their lives and the Holy Spirit occupies this place.

The Holy Spirit sanctifies us so that we may in turn sanctify the atmosphere around us, making it holy. Thus, people will smell the sweet aroma of Christ instead of the smell of corruption and uncleanness that fills the world.

This is our responsibility and our work. We cannot do anything on our own. Jesus said: *'for without Me you can do nothing'* (John 15: 5). The Holy Spirit is the One who sanctifies us and makes us holy; He is called the *'Holy'* Spirit.

Therefore, as much as we have fellowship with Him and He has a place in our lives, He sanctifies us and He also sanctifies the worldly atmosphere through us. We become holy and also the tool and channel for the holiness of the world. People will be able to see that our life is pure and holy, not defiled or unclean with evil and lusts.

In 2Peter 1: 4, it is written: *'by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust'*. He granted us the promises to escape the corruption of the world and become partakers of the divine nature.

This is the work of the Holy Spirit in the world.

There is corruption and death in the world. The Holy Spirit is the divine fire that dwells in us. St Macarius speaks about the Holy Spirit as fire, peace, and power. St Anthony speaks about the Holy Spirit as fire; in his mind, the Spirit is 'fire'. He tells his spiritual children: *'my children receive this fiery Spirit, whom I have also received; so that the commandment may become easy and light. Ask, and I, your father, will ask with you, so that you may receive Him.'* He said these words to monks who already have a growing

fellowship with God; yet, he was telling them that there was something else that they needed and that is: the divine fire.

This divine fire should be stirred and ignited. Apostle Paul tells his disciple Timothy: *'stir up the gift of God which is in you'* (2Timothy 1: 6). He also writes: *'do not quench the Spirit'* (1Thessalonians 5: 19).

The world around us is drowning in coldness to the point of freezing. *'Be filled with love; and many around you, who are dying of the cold, will find their way to life.'*² Be filled with God. God, the Holy Spirit, in me is fire. I should stir Him and not quench Him.

In the world, everything seems dead, cold and full of darkness, but this does not apply to the children of God, the Redeemed, who have the Holy Spirit in them as fire. They find light in the midst of darkness; warmth in the midst of coldness; power and victory in the midst of the defeat that surrounds the whole world. This is because *'He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world'* (1John 4: 4). *He who is in us* is the Holy Spirit, the pillar of cloud who went before the people, the children of Israel, and was light for them during the day and fire during the night. He was the pillar of cloud that overshadowed them and covered them, lighting their steps; and He was also a pillar of fire that gave them light at night and protected them:

'And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night' (Exodus 13: 21).

The Holy Spirit is a pillar of fire. Therefore, some of the saints like Seraphim of Sarov used to go up in the freezing mountains of Russia without feeling the cold. His disciples used to ask him how come he was not cold. They

² St. Seraphim of Sarov

would then look at him and see his face full of light like a shining sun; and he would tell them that the Holy Spirit in him gives him warmth and so he does not feel the cold that surrounds him.

This enabled many of the hermits and monks who lived in the wilderness wearing one layer of clothes not to suffer the cold or the heat because the Holy Spirit was their warmth in the cold and their breeze in the heat.

He is the tender Spirit, the Comforter. He refreshes our lives, brightens our ways, and shines upon our steps.

He was granted to us, but our problem is that we do not know Him! We need to know Him and enter into a deeper fellowship with Him.

3. The Holy Spirit and the Church

In the prayers of the Church, we say:

'O heavenly King, the Spirit of truth, the Comforter, who is everywhere and fills everybody; You are the treasure of goodness and giver of life. We ask you to graciously come and dwell within us, purify us from iniquity and save our souls.'

This means that the Holy Spirit is a Person not only a power. He comforts the hearts, taking away the fear, the worries and the brokenness. He gives us assurance even regarding the future. Therefore, Apostle Paul wrote: *'for I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers...'* (Romans 8: 38). He is sure regarding the future, the things to come. The Holy Spirit also transfers to us the life of Christ.

The Church is the bride of Christ. When the Holy Spirit is dwelling in the Church with His power, work, and guidance, the Church of Christ will be as

described in the book of Song of Songs 6: 10: *'Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, awesome as an army with banners'*. She will be filled with power, purity, and beauty.

The bride of Christ is glorious, *'having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing'* (Ephesians 5: 27). She has no sign of aging but is full of life, beauty, and reverence.

Anyone who enters in can immediately discern the different atmosphere. What is causing this difference? The presence of the Holy Spirit creates this different atmosphere of the Church.

The Holy Spirit is the Person of the Trinity who prepares the Church as the bride of Christ so that Christ may come and find her ready and prepared for Him. The Holy Spirit instils in the church watchfulness and continuous sanctification and purification so that she can become ready for her Bridegroom.

If we give a chance for the Holy Spirit to work in us, He makes us connected together as a family³. Out of the different individuals attending the church, He establishes one family which the bible calls *'members of the household of God'* (Ephesians 2: 19). This is not done on the social level at all or by being friendly with each other, but it is a special work of the Holy Spirit who connects the hearts in order to make us members of the household of God. He instils in us compassion towards one another; therefore, if one suffers, the others would feel pain: *'if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it'* (1Corinthians 12: 26). This connection and unity cannot be described or imagined until we truly experience it as a true work of the Holy Spirit in our midst.

³ 1 Corinthians 12:13

The Holy Spirit makes the church an actual house of God where God is present and where the angels and saints are present. Even when the churches or monasteries are empty, their dust and stones are good and pleasant because these places have been perfumed by the Holy Spirit. The Psalmist says: *'for Your servants take pleasure in her stones, and show favour to her dust'* (Psalm 102: 14).

The Holy Spirit also causes the worship and ministry in the church to be alive: the prayers, the liturgies, the meetings, the preaching and any ministry. Everything will have a different flavour if the Holy Spirit is present causing the atmosphere to be different and making the members to be one family, the household of God.

4. The Holy Spirit and the individual person

The Holy Spirit grants each one of us to understand God's special plan and calling for his/her life. One would discover it, understand it, love it, rejoice in it, and find in it all his ambitions and desires, what he may think of and even what he does not think of. With this calling and plan that satisfies all that one deeply desires, one would also find within himself all the talents and gifts necessary to carry out this calling as one also receives the anointing of the Spirit for that special calling.

Our problem is that we often make a plan for our lives of our own mind; this plan is full of good ambitions; however, we may not have the gifts and talents needed for it nor is it the way that God has planned for us. As a result, when we start to walk in it, we become estranged from ourselves; we get frustrated and lose the way.

On the other hand, if we have fellowship with the Holy Spirit and are walking with Him day after day, He leads our steps and enlightens our

minds, helping us to discover God's plan and the things that God has prepared for us. These are things about which it is written: *'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit'* (1Corinthians 2: 9, 10).

We often think that this verse refers to the things that God has prepared for us in heaven. But in fact, it refers to the things He prepared for us here on earth because the verse continues to say that God revealed them to us through His Spirit. In heaven, there will be no need for revelations because we will be able to see everything clearly, face to face.

What God has prepared for us is beyond our dreams and imagination and beyond anything that we have seen or heard. If we allow the Holy Spirit to make our eyes see and our ears hear what our heavenly Father has prepared for us, it will be beyond anything we have seen or heard before! This is because God is Love and He prepares for His children things that are beyond their expectations or dreams. The Holy Spirit reveals these things to us. We will then find that they are better than our best dreams and higher than our highest ambitions. The things that God has prepared for me are things that truly satisfy my heart, glorify God, and bless others around me. I would thus be blessed and be a blessing⁴.

5. The Holy Spirit and ministry

The Holy Spirit is the divine power that works in ministry. He builds up the inner life of the ministers making them holy as is befitting of the ministers of God.

⁴ Genesis 12:2b

He helps us fulfil the commandment that Apostle Paul mentioned in 2Corinthians 6: 4 – 10 regarding ministers:

'But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in sleeplessness, in fastings; by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.'

The Holy Spirit helps us to be ministers at the level of the ministry of the new covenant. It is written that He *'made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant'* (2Corinthians 3: 6). In other words, He made us ministers of grace, life, message, glory, and righteousness –as mentioned in 2Corinthians 3. It is written that the ministry of the new covenant is that of righteousness, grace, life, and glory. Those who carry this message should be at this level; they should be ministers of the new covenant and their life should reflect this. This would in turn allow the people we minister to get in touch with the Spirit of life.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of life. He draws near the spiritually-dead raising him up, the distressed comforting him, and the lost showing him the way.

By this our ministry would be a living, fruitful, and blessed ministry which glorifies the name of God.

The infilling of the Holy Spirit

Readings

- **Ephesians 5: 15 – 21**

'Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.'

- **Luke 11: 9 – 13**

'And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!'

Being filled with the Spirit is clearly a commandment requested of us, as we read in Ephesians.

We earlier highlighted the great importance of the Holy Spirit for one's personal spiritual life, for his fellowship with God, his prayer life, for

overcoming the world, for benefitting from the Church life, and for ministry. Therefore, it is necessary to know how to be filled by the Spirit.

This topic of the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, walking in the Spirit, and receiving the infilling of the Spirit is a very broad one. Therefore, we will just give some preliminary highlights here about how to be filled by the Spirit and how to remain in a continuous state of infilling.

The infilling of the Spirit requires 3 main steps:

- Emptying
- Surrender
- Trust

1. Emptying

If we want to fill a glass with water, for example, this glass should be empty first in order to be filled. If this glass is already filled with any other substance, we will never be able to fill it with water and keep the water in it since it is not empty and is already filled with something else.

Similarly, if I truly desire to be filled by the Spirit, knowing that it is an essential gift which I need, I should empty a space in my being for this infilling.

However, I need to be honest with myself and search my heart whether I really desire this gift to fill me completely or I only desire to receive a small portion of it. Inasmuch as the emptying is true and complete, the infilling will be true and great in measure.

The infilling is a continuous process. According to the original language, the verse above in Ephesians uses the continuous tense of the verb *'be filled'*.

This means that I will start to be filled and I will continue to be filled again and again.

The Holy Spirit is the gift of God. He is a true Person who accompanies me and walks by my side. It is written: *'He is at my right hand I shall not be moved'* (Psalm 16: 8). The Holy Spirit is the Person of the Trinity who walks by my side and who dwells in me. Therefore, if I desire a greater portion of this gift, I will need to empty myself completely so that this gift may flow in me abundantly. It is written: *'for God does not give the Spirit by measure'* (John 3: 34).

The more this gift flows, the more it works deep within me to transform me. At the same time I will experience Him as a Person walking by my side, opening the way for me when the enemy tries to close it, enlarging my step under me (Psalm 18: 36), opening the doors before me, giving light to my steps, delivering my soul when I am cast down, restoring my soul when I am low and frustrated, drawing near me when I am alone, healing me when I am hurt, and comforting me when I need special help. He is the Comforting Companion. He is the Lord, the Giver of Life. He revives me when I feel dead physically, psychologically or spiritually. He overflows with Life that swallows up death and frightens the powers of darkness.

If I truly long for this gift, the Person of the Spirit, who walks with me and accompanies me, I should make sure to empty myself completely to receive Him.

This process of emptying practically means a process of true repentance. I should examine myself to find the things that preoccupy me and that take a big space inside me. If these were cares and entanglements, I should repent, remembering that it is written: *'casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you'* (1Peter 5: 7).

Sometimes cares, entanglements and material things occupy a big space of one's inner being; and hence, hinder the pouring and infilling of the Spirit. At other times, this space is filled with people who occupy my mind and emotions. These people can be members of my family. It is not wrong to love them, but it is wrong to be emotionally tied to them to the extent of adoring them and allowing this to fill my inner being.

The bible tells us: *'honour your father and your mother'* (Exodus 20: 10) and at the same time, it tells us: *'If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple'* (Luke 14: 26). This means that when my love to my mother and father and relatives is a soulish unspiritual love that fills my whole being and takes the utmost priority in my life, I need to repent and ask the Holy Spirit to help me to lay aside this kind of soulish love so that the Holy Spirit may pour in me true divine love.

Soulsh or emotional relationships and bonds are not only limited to the members of my family. They can also include any other emotional bonds with other people of the opposite sex. This can also fill my inner being and occupy a big space.

I may perceive that something is not right but I may be unable to do deal with it. There is a big difference between wanting to lay aside yet being unable to, and not wanting to do so in the first place. In other words, there is a difference between truly wanting to get rid of a wrong emotional tie, yet not knowing how to do so; and not wholeheartedly wanting to do so and so try to compromise, not being convinced that it is wrong or that I should get rid of it. If I compromise, this means that I am putting these relationships as a priority in my life. However, I need to come to the Lord with trust and ask Him to free me from any wrong bonds.

Total emptying is necessary to receive continuous infilling. This emptying is practically done by going into the presence of God with true repentance, giving the Holy Spirit the chance to search me and see if there are concerns, entanglements and preoccupations towards things or people. I should then ask His help to get rid of these wrong ties. However, it is important that I want to get rid of them, even if I was unable to.

2. Surrender

Surrender means submitting to the will of God whilst realising that He has the upper hand that is in control of everything.

My own weaknesses can cause me problems. Also, the devil can find chances to interfere in my way if I have opened certain doors or windows for him. However, whether because of my weaknesses, the devil, or circumstances, I should still see that above all these there is an upper mighty, Fatherly, and faithful hand that is in control of all things.

In other words, I need to rest in God's will. I may still make mistakes as a result of my weaknesses. I should repent, but I should also know that there is an upper mighty Hand that I can trust and rest in. Even if my mistakes were the cause of my problems, I should trust that as long as I truly repented, God will take hold of all matters and correct them. I should neither blame myself nor be complacent. The correct attitude would be to know that even if people, circumstances, or the devil entered in or took control for a certain time because I opened the door for that, God will still allow all matters to work for my good –as long as I have repented. As a result, the things that seemed loss at first will become gain at the end.

The story of Job is a well-known example in this respect. The book of Job highlights how the devil may have charges against us and is sometimes

given permission; he also sometimes finds chances to destroy. As a result, the situation may seem totally dim and negative for some time –as was the case with Job. However, in the midst of this darkness and difficult circumstances, the divine hand remains in control –even if one cannot see it because of the dimness of the situation. Then, at a certain point, this divine hand is stretched out correcting everything and restoring what has been lost in a multiplied way. The possessions of Job were restored; his daughters and sons were restored; and his honour was restored. God lifted up Job’s face and told him to pray for his friends –who thought that Job was wrong –so that God may forgive them (Job 42).

We need to learn to surrender, trusting and resting in God’s faithful hand. As we walk with God, we may pass through the valley of the shadow of death, the valley of humility and brokenness, the valley of fear, the valley of loneliness and forsakenness; yet, all these valleys are divine training that will allow us to enter into new honour and new heights. We may be as if handed over; yet, *‘though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me’* (Psalm 23: 4).

This kind of surrender gives the chance for the Holy Spirit to overflow in me and fill me and these infillings will neither be lost nor fade away but will constantly remain.

Notice that the commandment of the infilling of the Spirit is followed by: *‘giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ’*.

How can I give thanks always?

Practically, it is difficult to give thanks in the midst of darkness, difficult circumstances, mistakes that caused problems, attacks and reproach from the devil like the case with Job.

What should I do in all these situations?

I should know that I am not left alone; God is my Father. His mighty hand works mystically in my life through a divine economy to bring out of all these things what is written in 1Corinthians 2: 9: *'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him'*.

Living a life of true repentance and being in constant fellowship with God allow the divine hand to be in control of everything in my life. As a result what seems dark today will shine brightly tomorrow and what seems narrow and tight today will become broad tomorrow.

Surrender and giving thanks are important things that open the door for the Holy Spirit in my life. Lack of surrender and lack of giving thanks grieve the Holy Spirit. As a result, I will not be in the state of continuous infilling and will consequently become weak.

The sign that I have true surrender is to give thanks. I need to learn to thank God with a calm peaceful heart in the midst of difficult situations. This requires training. I need to patiently train myself to see and perceive this divine hand. If I look back at past situations and reflect on them, I will be able to see that I have numerously went down into pits or walked through different valleys; yet, I came out better and stronger than before.

If I put my full trust in this divine hand, I will never be afraid of the devil, circumstances, people, or even myself:

I will never be afraid of myself despite its weaknesses.

I will never be afraid of the evil people who come in my way whom the bible calls Amalek⁵, the Canaanites.

I will never be afraid of the devil with all his cunning and deceitful plans, his traps and nets⁶.

I will never be afraid of circumstances and the unexpected things that may happen.

As a result, I will always be lifted upwards, feeling secure and at peace. Apostle Paul wrote: *'nor things present nor things to come...shall be able to separate us from the love of God'* (Romans 8: 38, 39).

How can he be sure regarding the things to come?

He has full trust in the *Pantocrator* who is in control of everything.

This is the meaning of true surrender.

I should not be saying: *'Lord, please do not allow any difficult circumstances.'* I cannot direct God according to my own mind and as I want. Besides, I do not see as He sees and do not know what is for my best as He knows. It is written: *'out of the eater came something to eat, and out of the strong came something sweet'* (Judges 14: 14). This is a divine mystery.

I should train myself in this matter and not keep asking God to keep the devil out of my way. God is righteous even with the devil. If the devil finds a chance at a moment when I slumbered, God cannot tell him no because God is righteous. However, God will make everything work for my good; He will

⁵ Exodus 17

⁶ James 4:7

train me and help me to overcome and become spiritually stronger; He *'trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle'* (Psalm 144: 1).

Similarly, difficult circumstances shape me and broaden me. I should not ask God to change circumstances, cast the devil away, and take my weaknesses away. But I should rather tell Him: *'I trust You; I surrender to You; I give You thanks.'* I can still ask Him to cast the devil away and give me strength; but I should not complain and grumble saying: *'O' Lord, why did You allow such and such thing to happen?'* Instead, I should give thanks and surrender and ask Him to teach me the lesson I need to learn and to help me to grow through my weaknesses, the distressing circumstances, and the battles of the enemy.

3. Trust

After I go through the process of emptying and training myself to surrender in such a way, I should ask for the gift of the Spirit-as we have read in Luke 11: 13:

'If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!'

The heavenly Father is saying that He will give this gift to whoever asks of Him. At the same time, there is a clear commandment that tells us that we should be continuously filled by the Spirit. God never gives us a commandment without helping us to fulfil it. The commandment is clear in Ephesians 5: *'be filled with the Spirit'*. Also, the Father says that whoever asks for this gift of infilling, He will grant it to him.

I cannot ask Him before I do the emptying because He will tell me that He desires to give me but there is no space in me to receive because my mind,

emotions, and my inner being is busy, preoccupied and filled with other things.

After I empty my inner being and learn to surrender and rest in Him, I can then ask: *'Heavenly Father, I ask for this gift of infilling; I desire to be filled by the Spirit according to Your commandment.'*

I am coming to the Lord based on these biblical references and truths; therefore, I should trust that I will be given. In the very same passage, it is written: *'ask, and it will be given to you'*. Therefore, He will surely give me.

I may not necessarily feel anything. The spiritual life is based on faith not on feelings⁷. I should only trust. If I have fulfilled the required conditions and asked for the gift, it will surely be granted to me.

The channels through which the Holy Spirit flows

- **The Life of Prayer**
- **The Life of the Church**
- **The Life of Ministry**

A. The Life of Prayer

The early fathers say: *'the Holy Spirit is prayer'*.

Inasmuch as I learn to have regular times of prayer and quiet times, the Holy Spirit will flow in me. I will receive gift after gift, infilling after infilling, power after power and He will continue to flow in me.

When the Holy Spirit starts to overflow in me, my whole spiritual life will be greatly transformed; my recurring spiritual problems and weaknesses will disappear and I will receive the opposite positive qualities and

⁷ 2 Corinthians 5:7

strength; my spiritual questions that had perplexed me and I had found no answer to will be resolved.

If I truly desire the infilling of the Spirit, I should have a regular consistent prayer life because this is one of the essential channels through which the Spirit flows.

I need to learn to pray the Psalms because the word of God allows the Holy Spirit to flow. In the same passage, it is written: *'addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart.'*

B. The Life of the Church

All the Church sacraments are channels for the infilling of the Spirit. This includes repentance, confession, Holy Communion, and attending and sharing in the mystical services and celebrations.

It also includes attending spiritual meetings and having fellowship with the rest of the congregation, my brothers and sisters with whom I am connected in love. I should sense that the meeting is part of me and the people attending it are my family. I should be an active member in the meeting partaking in the singing, the prayer, and listening to the message. All these are channels for the Holy Spirit; it is called the channel of fellowship.

Another channel for the Spirit through the life of the Church is my fellowship with the saints and angels. Many people have experienced receiving strength from the fellowship with the saints⁸. In fact this strength is from the Holy Spirit. When the saints intercede on our behalf, God responds by granting us the power and strength of the Holy Spirit. At times,

⁸ Hebrews 12:1, 2

the problem may be lifted up; yet, at other times I am lifted above the problem.

However, we should learn to ask the prayer of the saints in regards to our spiritual life not our earthly problems. We should desire to follow in their steps and taste the same spiritual richness and sweetness they have tasted.

C. The Life of Ministry

It is written: *'he who waters will also be watered himself'* (Proverbs 11: 25).

I should be preoccupied and having such a holy burden towards others and talking with them about Jesus and His love and sharing with them my genuine experience.

The more I think of others and of their needs, the more the gift of the Spirit flows in me. The Holy Spirit waters me so that I may water others. And the more I water, I will be watered even more; the more I give, I will be given more⁹. This is a divine mystery. In the earthly material world, when I give I decrease; but, in the spiritual world, when I give I increase.

To sum up, there are **3 conditions** or steps to receive the infilling of the Spirit and **3 channels** to receive this gift and continue to receive it. The conditions or steps are: *emptying, surrender, and trust*. The channels are: *the life of prayer, the life of the Church, and the life of ministry*.



⁹ Luke 6:38