

LutheranRenewal

Number 280 • January/February 2011

Six things the Spirit can do for us!

By Paul Anderson

Jesus didn't teach much about the Holy Spirit; He lived in the power of the Spirit. As He prepared to leave, He instructed His disciples on the Spirit. He would be passing the baton, he told them, and they needed to know that the same Spirit that empowered Him was soon coming to fill them. The greatest transition in ministry ever to take place was soon to occur. The disciples felt devastated, but they would not doubt God for a moment once this life-changing exchange took place. So great would be the influence of the Spirit on their lives that they would never wish Jesus back. What was Jesus offering them (and us) in the Upper Room that could possibly supersede His personal presence?

1. Live Within Us

Jesus said, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever... for he lives with you and will be in you" (John 14:16,17). The internal presence of the Holy Spirit offered endless possibilities for relationship and ministry. They would never be left outside the immediate help of the Almighty God. Where they were, He also would be. They would be given immediate access to guidance, truth, comfort, and advocacy.

The glory, the encouragement, and the radical benefit of having God choose to live in our bodies cannot be overestimated. The world is looking for God. They fashion gods that they then bow down to. They go on long journeys to holy sites with the hopes of brushing up against the divine, of having a temporary holy encounter. Soon the disciples themselves would be the place for the Presence. Throughout the Old Testament God had chosen a place. It was at the tabernacle. If you wanted to find God, He was camping out there. In fact, His glory filled the temple. Three times a year devout Jews came to Jerusalem to experience the living God at that holy structure. When the temple was destroyed, so was the faith of many who saw no possibility of God living apart from that place. But prophets spoke of One closely related



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to God who would come and embody His presence. When Jesus came, John wrote that *“the Word became flesh and dwelt among us”* (John 1:14). If you wanted to find God, you could look for Jesus. But now Jesus said that God, communicated by the Spirit, would be personally present where His people were. In other words, we hold the Presence. The same God who lived at the tabernacle would now be living inside us. And Jesus said, *“Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them”* (Matthew 18:20).



2. Counsel Us Personally

Jesus used what is now a famous New Testament word, “paraclete” in English, to talk about a primary role of the Spirit. It means many things in one word: coach, comforter, trainer, helper. It suggests something far more personal than a teacher lecturing a class. The Paraclete will go one-on-one with us, defending us when we are attacked, encouraging us when we grow discouraged, exhorting us when we need a kick, and counseling us when we need a clear path. Jesus had done all this for them. He had defended them against the attacks of the Pharisees. He

had promised Peter everything he needed to overcome the onslaught of the enemy, but the disciples had experienced His help only when He was with them. Soon the Spirit would take up residence in their bodies and not leave—ever. When they faltered with knowing or walking in the truth, the One called the Spirit of Truth (three times in the Upper Room discourse) would navigate them through their uncertainties into the freedom and confidence that truth brings rather than the bondage that comes from embracing lies. For their struggles of identity, the ever-present Spirit would bring healing on the inside.

Many people see a counselor on a regular, weekly basis. The presence of the Spirit 24/7 would upgrade that kind of help significantly. The Spirit would never say, “This might be a good way to go.” He always knows where to go, what to do, what to say, how to think. The Holy Spirit gives us the unlimited potential of a relationship that continues into the night when we sleep, that is offering help even when we are unaware of it, that is demonstrating personally to us the love of the Father. Paul says that God’s love is *“poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us”* (Romans 5:5).

3. Teach Us Accurately

Jesus said, *“The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you”* (John 14:25,26). No teacher on earth can make that claim. The Spirit has infinite access to information about us, about God, about the world. We desperately need the Holy Spirit, much more than any human teacher, pastor or mentor. In his letters, John gives us a highly dangerous and powerful word about the teaching ministry of the Spirit: *“As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him”* (1 John 2:27). John is not asserting that we can dismiss human teachers, but he is saying that what they give us cannot be compared to what the Spirit imparts from within. Pastors easily develop a co-dependent relationship with their congregations—they need him and he loves to feel needed, so he does most or all of the teaching and preaching. In reality, a pastor is assigned to connect hungry people with the living God, the greatest Teacher of all.

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Romans 5:5

The all-knowing Spirit enjoys perfect recall. We easily forget what we have learned from Jesus, and it's impossible to remember everything we've read from Scripture or heard from teachers. But the Spirit can bring it back to us according to our need and openness. The Spirit within is always close, always instructing, always accurately guiding us into greater truth, not only doctrinal truth but with experiential truth, truth about our job, our family, our problems, our future.

4. Make Christ Our Center

Jesus further said that *"when the Counselor comes...he will testify about me"* (John 15:26) *"... He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you"* (John 16:14). The great mystery of the Gospel, hidden for centuries but now about to be revealed to those ready to receive it is, *"Christ in you, the hope of glory"* (Col. 1:27). Our greatest need is to live in Christ. On the cross He took our old nature and we receive His holy nature, to such a degree that Paul wrote, *"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me"* (Gal. 2:20). Paul also said that Christ IS our life (Col. 3:4). That means literally that my life is His and His life is mine. This great New Testament truth, as we apply it consistently, transforms us like perhaps no other truth. And the Holy Spirit's singular agenda of making Jesus Lord in our lives (no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Spirit) is realized as we submit to the God within us. Could anything be more wonderful, more engaging, more encouraging?!

5. Convict the World

"When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment" (John 16:8). Good news! Our job description does not include conviction. We were commanded to let our lights shine

and allow the Spirit to do what the Spirit can do. The Holy Spirit can speak even to people with hard hearts. He tells them three things: (1) their unbelief and independence of Jesus is sin; (2) Jesus is the righteous One—nobody else—and His return to the Father proves His Lordship; and (3) the cross of Jesus, where sin and Satan were condemned, makes it clear that our lives will come under the scrutiny of a holy God at the end of the age.

6. Guide Us Effectively

"When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come" (John 16:13). Our inheritance in Christ includes the guidance of the Spirit: *"Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God"* (Romans 8:14). We prove our adoption into the Father's family by the guidance we receive. And the Spirit, who knows our future because He lives in the eternal present, can take us there. Instead of making decisions about our destiny out of anxiety, we can make them confidentially because of the Spirit's presence and prompting from within.

One of greatest joys of my heart has come through learning to follow the leading of the Spirit. Could you imagine someone saying, "I wish we lived in Old Testament times when people were guided clearly, like with a cloud by day and a pillar by night?" Wrong. That wouldn't even begin to compare with the internal GPS system provided by the eternal Spirit. Guidance is more about the Spirit's ability to lead than about our ability to follow. He's been leading God's people for thousands of years, and He can certainly get us there. Worry means that we are taking the job upon ourselves. Peace means we are believing in His ability to get the job done.



That means
literally my life
is His and His
life is mine.

from Col. 3:4

We desperately need to surrender to the work of the Spirit within. Jesus promised the disciples that they would be receiving the Spirit, who would make all the difference of the world in their lives. And He makes that same difference in ours! Paul closed his second letter to the Corinthians with this benediction: *"May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all!"* Grace empowers us to live as God wants us to live. The love of God captures us, gives us a solid identity, and motivates us to live by grace. The fellowship (koinonia) of the Holy Spirit makes it all work. Every Christian activity, such as prayer, worship, outreach, compassionate care, and spiritual warfare, takes place through a partnership between you and the Holy Spirit. Let us get to know this One, without whom none of it would be possible.



"Holy Spirit, thank you for coming to live inside me.

Thank you for your empowering presence.

I surrender afresh to you for your ongoing activity in my life. Please continue to counsel me as you have done in the past, and teach me the truth, especially the wonderful truth of Christ in me. Guide my steps from day to day. Through Christ Jesus, I pray. Amen."



Paul Anderson

Equipping Conference February 4-5, 2011



"The Lord's favor is available to every single one of us. It's favor to understand God, to go to a deeper level in Him, and to upgrade our vision and image of who God is for us. It's part of coming into the next phase of accomplishing the impossible."

Graham Cooke

We are grateful to be able to host this two-day seminar with Graham.

Location: North Heights Lutheran Church
1700 Highway 96 West, Arden Hills, MN 55112

Early-bird price: \$35.
Pre-registration closes on January 21.
On-site registration welcome.

Brochure and online registration: www.LutheranRenewal.org
For details, please call: 651-490-1517, ext. 13

Looking Ahead in 2011

Please join us in prayer:

- Local Conferences: February 4-5 Equipping Conference and August 3-6 Holy Spirit Conference
- Regional Conferences and Seminars in Latvia, Finland, Norway, Canada and across the U.S.
- Ministry to young adults through Communitas, the young adult community that meets in Paul and Karen Anderson's home
- Ministry to women through Arise! Women's Ministry: April 1-2 local conference, regional conferences, Uplink small groups, personal prayer, and support
- Counseling for pastors and leaders
- Spiritual direction for individuals
- Teaching through newsletters and website

We would appreciate your financial support for these plans as well.

