

Going Deeper

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.” (I Corinthians 2: 13-14, NASB)

It's time that true believers in the Evangelical Church abandon their quest for religious entertainment. For too many years the Church has been practicing marketing techniques to attract “seekers,” when her quest should have been steered in another direction: growing deeper into *“The things freely given to us by God.”* There's no such thing as a seeker. The unregenerate do not seek after God. They seek the blessings God's people enjoy, but God's people often fail to seek the true blessings the Father has bequeathed us through the Person of the Holy Spirit.

One evening in a time of fellowship with other believers, I brought up the subject of the necessity of believers going deeper in the things of the written and living Word. With a disapproving grunt, the leader of the group pooh-pooed the idea of the “deeper life,” as though it were some sort of spiritual aberration. It grieved my spirit that an evangelical leader would discourage his congregants from that, which is necessity for spiritual growth. It appeared to me that the “mystery” of which Paul spoke in Colossians 1:25-29 was still a mystery to this church leader.

So, what's the big deal about delving deeper into the things of the Spirit of God? Why should I be concerned about going deeper? What good will it do me to pursue a deeper relationship with God?

First, we must realize why God gave us His Holy Spirit. The “natural” or unregenerate individual has a spirit devoid the presence of the Holy Spirit. He (or she) is born biologically alive but spiritually “dead.” Being alienated from God by sin, his spirit does not have the life of God implanted within by the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit. He is not a *“partaker of the divine nature”*¹. His spirit is alive and can communicate with the spirit of other human individuals;² but his spirit has not been spiritually quickened by the birth from above which results in his body becoming a temple of the Holy Spirit³ and his being made capable of *“combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.”*

The *“spirit of the world”* is Satanic. It is demonic. It is the human spirit alienated and separated from God. In Ephesians Paul puts it this way: *“And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.”*⁴ We don't usually think of unbelievers being strongly influenced by Satan and his demonic minions; but we must remember that Jesus

¹ II Peter 1:4

² I Corinthians 2:11

³ I Corinthians 6:19

⁴ Ephesians 2:1-2

condemned the religious leaders of His day by saying, *“You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desire of your father.”*⁵ We don’t like to think of our unsaved friends and neighbors as children of Satan; but that’s what they are.⁶ We should appreciate the fact that their father the devil can only be in one place at a time. We should be aware that demonic influence in our culture is subtler than in countries where satanic worship is more prevalent.

Secondly, we must ask ourselves if we really need all of the hoopla that is common in many evangelical churches today to encourage us to go deeper into the things of God. Consider these two verses from the New Testament:

*“These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. And as for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.”*⁷

*“Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”*⁸

We know that the Scripture teaches the necessity of the local assembly of believers. There should be elders, deacons, and pastors to feed and care for the flock of God in the preaching of the Word and practicing the Sacraments. I would in no way discount the necessity and viability of the visible church as the means of furthering God’s work in the ministry of the invisible church. But I believe the ministry of the Holy Spirit to individual believers has been downplayed and various “ministries” of the local assembly have, quite often, supplanted the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

We need to return to the Biblical teaching that the Holy Spirit is God’s agent in this world, working His eternal and immutable will in His creation, His spiritual kingdom, and in the lives of His people. Speaking of the Holy Spirit, Benjamin Warfield said,

“As He is the source of all cosmical life, and of all theocratic life, so is He also the source of all spiritual life. He upholds the soul in being and governs it as part of the great world He has created; He makes it sharer in the theocratic blessings which He brings to His people; but He deals with it, too, within, confirming it to its ideal. In a word, the Spirit of God, in the Old Testament, is not merely the immanent Spirit, the source of all the world’s life and all the world’s movement; and not merely the inspiring Spirit, the source

⁵ John 8:44

⁶ Ref., Galatians 3:26

⁷ I John 2:26-27

⁸ Luke 11:11-13

of His church's strength and safety and of its development in accordance with its special mission; He is as well the indwelling Spirit of holiness in the hearts of God's children."⁹

It is my firm conviction that Christ's Church in America needs to return to the Scripture's teaching on the ministry of the Holy Spirit. What should the average layperson do? Each of us should constantly pray and ask for the Spirit's work in our lives. It isn't a complicated, unattainable dream. It is the work of the Spirit to conform us to the image of Christ. It is as practical and down to earth as breathing. The Holy Spirit is God's breath in our world. He is the God-appointed generator of our sanctification, as we feed upon the Word of God and endeavor, by our private devotional life and our community life in the Church, to abide in Christ. The mystery of which Paul spoke – "*Christ in you, the hope of the glory,*"¹⁰ is that supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in us from hour to hour. Christ is in us by the power of the Triune God. And the ministry of the Holy Spirit seeks to bear Christ's image through us to a world that "*lies in the power of the wicked one.*"¹¹

Today the Evangelical Church is caught up in the world's method of marketing. We market truth like we market Starbuck's coffee in the church foyer. We would do well to return to the teachings of the Word and discover anew the vital, life-giving, powerful ministry that God has given us in the Holy Spirit. We would do well to memorize the words of Isaac Watts' beautiful hymn:

Come, Holy Spirit, heav'nly Dove,
with all Thy quick'ning powers,
kindle a flame of sacred love
in these cold hearts of ours.

In vain we tune our formal songs,
in vain we strive to rise;
hosannas languish on our tongues,
and our devotion dies.

Dear Lord, and shall we ever live
at this poor dying rate,
our love so faint, so cold to Thee,
and Thine to us so great?

Come, Holy Spirit, heav'nly Dove,
with all Thy quick'ning powers,
come, shed abroad a Savior's love
and that shall kindle ours.

⁹ Benjamin B. Warfield, *Biblical and Theological Studies* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1952), p. 146.

¹⁰ Colossians 1:27

¹¹ I John 5:19

Has what I have written made sense to you? I would urge you to consider the following questions.

To Ponder:

1. What is your understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit throughout human history?
2. Do you ask God the Father to deepen your understanding of the Spirit's ministry?
3. Have you ever really studied the Scriptures to discover the Spirit's ministry?
4. Do you ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with His "fruit" that your life might be fruitful in God's kingdom?
5. Do you pray to the Holy Spirit, thanking Him for regenerating you, guiding you, protecting you, and interpreting your prayers to the Father?
6. Are you desirous of plunging into "*the things freely given to us by God*"?

To Pray:

Blessed Father, Christ my Savior, Blessed, life-giving Holy Spirit, please help me to understand more of your redeeming love; help me to thirst for the holiness that can only be produced in my mortal being by the working of Your Holy Spirit. Please forgive me for grieving Your heaven-sent comforter and guide; please fill me with your Spirit of power, wisdom and love; use my life to display the image of your Son to those who dwell in darkness. I ask this for your glory and praise.