

# I Believe in the Holy Spirit

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 13 April 2008

Preacher: Canon Dr. J.I. Packer

[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, friends, we are going to talk about the Holy Spirit, as Bill has said. And we need the help of the Holy Spirit if we are to get hold of the right end of the stick, if I am to talk in wisdom, and if you are to listen with wisdom in your own hearts too.

So, let's pray together. Holy Father, together we bow before your throne, and we acknowledge that, apart from the Holy Spirit himself ministering wisdom to us, we shall be mired in folly all the days of our life.

So, right now, we pray. Amen. Send your Holy Spirit to give us a right judgment in all things, and grant that as we discern the reality of his ministry, so we may be enriched by his work in our own hearts.

Grant it, Lord, we pray, in the name of Christ, our Saviour and our Lord. Amen. Amen. I was asked a moment ago which passage of Scripture I was going to work with, and I replied, and I replied, I am offering today an overview which makes reference to quite a number of biblical passages as my outline proceeds.

And the purpose of an overview is, indeed, the very shape of the words is at all, so that you get the perspective, so that you get the total picture in outline, so that you're able to have a good look at the forest before you plunge in among the trees.

[ 2 : 2 0 ] As a teacher, I am a great believer in overviews, and I am being, shall I say, natural or packer in character in what I say to you this morning.

For an overview, it is. Let me start with the most fundamental assertion of all. Without affirming the truth about the Holy Spirit, you cannot state the Christian Gospel.

This becomes clear as early as John's Gospel, chapter 3, when Jesus is confronted one evening by a Pharisaic theologian named Nicodemus.

Nicodemus apparently wants to invite him to become a member of the Jerusalem Theological Society. He's a rabbi from the country, and Nicodemus begins by a very honorific and respectful address.

Rabbi, we know that you're a teacher come from God. No one can do the miracles that you do, except unless God was with him. Jesus doesn't reply in kind.

[ 3 : 5 0 ] What he does is to start, startlingly, a different line of thought altogether. Nicodemus is saying, Rabbi, we accept you as one of us.

Jesus' reply means, you are not with me. See?

What did Jesus say? Unless one is born again, he cannot see, and then he repeats it, nor can he enter the kingdom of God.

You must be born of the Spirit. That phrase appears shortly after in John's narrative. What does it mean to be born of the Spirit?

Well, Jesus goes on talking and makes it plain that if you want to be born of the Spirit, then you must listen to his teaching and take it to heart.

[ 4 : 5 7 ] And he says, we speak of what we know, and we testify of what we've seen, and you folk, you Pharisaic theologians here in Jerusalem, you don't receive our witness.

I think that Jesus probably had some of his disciples in the room with him, and that's why he says, we and our. Already, Jesus' disciples are entering into the new life of those that are born again of the Spirit, and Jesus, of course, is the bringer of that new life to them.

And then he goes on to say, that as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believes in him might have eternal life.

And he there is clearly looking forward to his own cross, through which he is going to bring salvation, forgiveness of sin, and new life to those who trust him.

And he rounds off what he's saying with the words that we know so well, for God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that all who believe in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

[ 6 : 28 ] But, though, as I say, he's declaring the gospel to Nicodemus, and flooring Nicodemus by the things that he's saying, it wouldn't be a full statement of the gospel had he not begun where he did, unless you were born again of the Spirit.

He says of water and the Spirit. By water, he means by a work of God that purges the heart from the guilt and the slavery to sin, which, alas, is natural to us.

Unless you're born again of the Spirit, you cannot see and you cannot enter the Kingdom of God. The Trinity's here. Kingdom of God, that's the Kingdom of the Father.

Jesus Christ on the Cross, that's the second person of the Godhead making atonement for our sin. And, now, the Holy Spirit bringing people into a new life, so new, so different from the life they were living before that Jesus compares it to being born all over again in human life.

Birth, so they say, is the biggest trauma that any of us suffer at any stage. And, you get that impression, actually, if you're in at the birth and the baby appears and the first thing the baby does is start squalling.

[ 8 : 13 ] Sign of life and health, yes, but also a sign of trauma. The babies had a shock to the system. Well, yes, and being born again is also a very great change from the life that one was living before.

And, once more, let me say, it isn't a full statement of the Gospel unless that dimension of things is filled in.

New birth by the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity and the atonement that he's made.

That's the way into the kingdom of the Father. But, without both, I mean, both faith in the Savior and his atoning work and new birth of the Spirit, a person doesn't actually get into the kingdom and come to enjoy the reality of God's gift of new life.

Well, now, against the background of that truth, which you could focus this way by saying Jesus is making God's work of grace appear as a team job in which Father, Son, and Holy Spirit work together for the salvation of needy folk.

[ 9 : 44 ] Against that background, let me say, when I was younger, and that's quite some time ago, when I was still a student and coming up to theological study, it was often said that the Holy Spirit is the Cinderella of the Trinity, sitting in the hearth, nobody knowing or caring about the doctrine of the Spirit and his work.

Others said the Holy Spirit is the displaced person of the Godhead. Same point. as I looked and listened around the churches, I verified what was being said.

People weren't talking about the ministry of the Holy Spirit bringing us into the new life. And for lack of such talk, one had to conclude, sadly, the gospel isn't being preached.

Part of it is being preached. But, as you will understand, a part, however diligently presented, cannot take the place of the whole story.

Any more than half a bridge across a chasm can give you the way to cross. no, it is vital that the Spirit be spoken of and that his ministry be appreciated.

[ 11 : 27 ] And in those days, back in England, it wasn't being spoken of, it wasn't being appreciated, and it was a condition which I call under-belief.

people weren't believing enough and the churches were languishing because folk, let's put it in the language to which we were accustomed, folk simply weren't getting converted.

Well, in place of the new life of folk who are converted, what you had in the churches as I saw them was, well, institutionalism, an attitude of loyalty to the church building and the prayer book services and the routines of worship on Sunday, but there it stopped.

And there was moralism. That was the attitude of people in the churches worshipping on Sunday who were quite sure that it was by trying to be good that they would get to glory.

They were relying, you see, putting it in biblical terms, on their good works. And formalism was very much in evidence.

[ 12 : 56 ] People going through the wording of prayer book services without a thought as to what it all meant. Church going and sharing and sharing in the services evoke no more thought on their part than does the action of cleaning our teeth in our daily life here and now.

We do it, we don't think about it, it's part of the routine, and that's that. And so, you can understand, clericalism had set in, the idea really that it's the ordained ministers who do all the work in the church and we, I was one there, you see, so I say we, we lay folk, well, we're not expected to do anything beyond being in church when we're asked to be there and supporting the minister as he does his stuff.

Well, all of that is sub-Christianity, all of that is the expression of under-belief, all that is a pathetic routine which cries aloud to heaven that the truth about the Spirit's ministry is not appreciated.

then in the 1960s, fast forward 20 years actually, in the 1960s, the charismatic tidal wave broke on the Anglican church in England and amongst the charismatic folk who got their vision, their theology, their ideas from the Pentecostal churches, it was Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit all the time, almost to the exclusion of anything else.

You were a second class Christian, they said, unless you had been baptized in the Holy Spirit, and a lot of them said what the Pentecostals have always said, that the ordinary sign that you've been baptized in the Holy Spirit is that you will speak in tongues, and then when that has happened, you are to look around and see or recognize in others, and then find in yourself spiritual gifts, that is, capacities for ministry and service, every member ministry in the body of Christ, through the gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to every Christian, that's part of the New Testament pattern.

[ 15 : 54 ] So said the Charismatics and so far they were right. But the exclusive emphasis on the Holy Spirit, whereby the Spirit was separated in teaching and in thought and in the life of prayer and spiritual discipline, separated both from the Lord Jesus and from the Father, that was not right.

The Trinity is a single team, I'm bold to say team, because the three persons of the Godhead always work together in everything that they do, and team, is our standard English word for persons who do that.

The Trinity is a team, and full appreciation of the work that God is doing requires appreciation of the team.

So you must talk not simply about the Holy Spirit, but about the Father and the Son as well. them. And from this standpoint, it seemed to me that the charismatic folk and the heat of their zeal were exhibiting what I call over-belief in the Holy Spirit.

Under-belief when the Spirit wasn't appreciated at all, over-belief when he is, as it were, made to elbow the Son and the Father out of the scene, shifting them from central stage to somewhere in the wings, so that the Spirit, in glorious isolation, can be appreciated.

[ 17 : 47 ] Well, you can see my point, that's wrong too. So what I want to do in the time that I have is give you an overview of what I believe to be the Bible perspective on the work of the Spirit.

It begins with a recognition that God is a team, and that the person and work of the Spirit must be understood in team terms.

This is something that became clear when the Lord Jesus came, and the New Testament tells us all about it. This is something that was only implicit in Old Testament times, so that you can properly say the Trinity and the place of the Spirit within the Trinity is Christian revelation.

What do you have in the Old Testament? Well, actually, you have well over a hundred explicit references to the Holy Spirit, and he is presented, or rather, the Spirit of God is presented in relation to four spheres of activity.

but the Spirit of God is a phrase which signifies divine energy in action. No stress in Old Testament times was laid on the distinct personhood of the Spirit.

[ 19 : 30 ] Do you see what I mean? Spirit of God in the Old Testament is a phrase like hand of God or arm of the Lord. it's a phrase which signifies God in action but doesn't suggest distinct personhood.

So, you see, you read in the very first chapter of Genesis, very first verses, that the Spirit of God brooded on the face of the waters and God, or rather the Spirit of God put everything into shape established order out of the formlessness that was there before.

And that is actually the first connection in which we hear of the Spirit, the Spirit as the agent of creation. And later on, in books like the Psalter and the book of Job, you hear much about the Spirit of God in charge of the weather and the ongoing order of creation.

The Spirit, in other words, sustains the created order that he brought into being. And you hear of the Spirit also in connection with the utterances directly from God that were spoken by the prophets.

prophets. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he's anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor and so on. And there are many statements by the prophets to the effect that the Spirit of God gives them their oracles, their messages, they are words of God, all right.

[ 21 : 22 ] And there's the third connection in which we hear of the Spirit and we hear on occasion also of the Spirit as the one who renews people from the inside out, renews them out of well what I'm going to call ungodliness, lives lived with their backs to God, lives lived in self indulgence and disobedience to God.

Spirit renews people, out of lives like that, into lives of response to God and his love and his word and his purpose.

You get that for instance in the book of Ezekiel chapter 36. Ezekiel is looking beyond the exile, he's a prophet at the time of the exile, looking beyond the exile and God through Ezekiel says this, I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will put within you and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh and I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules and I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses and I will bless you.

well, all of that is God in action, but at no point is it made clear that the Holy Spirit who is the agent in this these four actions is personally God.

However, when you get to the New Testament first of all, you meet the Lord Jesus, God come in the flesh.

[ 23 : 33 ] The Lord Jesus is the one to whom God says at the time of his baptism, this is my beloved son who gives me great delight.

And the Lord Jesus in John 14 through 16 particularly, but in many places actually in his teaching, makes reference to a person whom he is going to send into the world following his own ministry on earth, and this person is going to carry on the work that he himself has begun, not indeed a work of atonement, but a work of renewing lives.

And this person is as personal as can be. He is the Spirit of God, but he is going to witness, he's going to testify, and when you get further on in the New Testament you discover he can be lied to and grieved.

this Holy Spirit then is a personal agent. And so the Gospel story confronts us with the reality of the Trinity.

There's the Father, there's the Son, and there's the Holy Spirit. One God, yes, not three gods, tritheism is a mistake, but one God, within the unity of whose being there are three persons, three, what am I to say, personal centers, three personal agents, God is, as I said earlier, a team.

[ 25 : 23 ] So much then for the revelation of the personhood of the Spirit, which I have been assuming ever since I started to speak, you've seen that, and what we discover as we read on in the New Testament is that on Pentecost day, following Jesus' ascension into heaven, yes, ascension, that's what the disciples saw and testified to, they were on the top of a little hill outside Jerusalem, and a cloud came down, cloud, mist, you see, like mist does come down, cloud-like when you're up on high hills or low mountains, and the disciples distinctly saw Jesus going up, not sideways, certainly not down, but up into the cloud, and they testified to that, and we call it the ascension, and ten days after the ascension came Pentecost day, and the disciples who were together praying day by day for the endowment of power which Jesus had promised them through the gift of the Spirit, which they didn't fully understand, but he had told them to wait for it, and they were doing this, and preparing themselves to receive whatever

God was going to send, well, came nine o'clock in the morning on Pentecost Sunday, and their experience was that they heard something that sounded like a tornado, and up above them, the ceiling of the room, they looked up and they saw flames, and flames came down and touched the heads of each of them, that's the Pentecost story, the flames didn't come up from the ground, the flames came down from the ceiling, it's clear from the way Luke tells the story that that was how it was, the people, and, well, they found they were different people, they tumbled out of the room where they'd been, and rushed into the street, and Peter, the natural leader, let's call him that, because he was a natural leader, he was a bluff, hearty fellow, though in the days when Jesus was on earth, he'd been making all kinds of mistakes, boo-boos, as we would say, in his own discipleship, he lacked stability, but now,

Peter's a different man, he not only has stability, and shows it through all the rest of his career, that we know, but he had insight as well, and before you know it really, Peter is standing up, I suppose, on a wall or something like that, someplace where he could rise a bit physically above the crowd, and he is preaching a sermon, a sermon that embodies real understanding of the economy of God's grace through the Lord Jesus, it's a sermon that ends up with a proclamation of the gospel, Jesus has died, according to the Father's plan, he has died for sins, and the remission of sins is now a reality for everyone who trusts him, he's getting to that, and then he's interrupted, his sermon has made a great impression on the people listening, and they're interrupting him now, brothers, what are we to do?

That's what they're shouting out from the crowd, and so Peter gets very quickly to his conclusion, repent, repent of the part that you played and the acceptance that you gave to the crucifixion of Jesus, which was a crime, repent, repent, and turn to him, that your sins may be blotted out, repent, and be baptized in his name, in other words, identify yourselves as those who are going to be his disciples hence forth.

That was the significance of baptism for them then. And, says Peter, then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit that we've received. He didn't know all the theology as yet, but he did know that the gift of the Holy Spirit that they'd received, what, an hour ago or less, that had made them into different people, and that all the Lord Jesus disciples are meant to be different people in just the same respect.

[ 30 : 43 ] Repent, be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. And, as one reads on in the book of Acts, which tells this story, and as one reads the epistles, that is the pastoral letters that apostles wrote to the young churches that emerged as this message was proclaimed, you realize that Christianity was this being established preached as the religion of the Holy Spirit, not in an isolated sense, but in the sense that the Father planned that the Son should come, live and die to put away sins, and the Father and the Son together have planned that the Holy Spirit should come and renew hearts, and transform lives.

And the people to whom the letters are written, they are persons whose lives have been transformed through the gift of the Spirit, they are living in the Spirit, through the Spirit, by the Spirit, and things are totally different for them from the way that their life was before.

well, this is what we need to hold on to. I hope that it isn't real news to any of us.

Here at St. John's we do try to maintain the apostolic gospel in its fullness, and to say what needs to be said about life in the Holy Spirit.

I now will spend the rest of my time talking about some of the specific ways in which life in the Spirit does differ from life without the Spirit.

[ 32 : 57 ] Life in the Spirit doesn't become a reality for anyone who hasn't yet come to a personal faith in the Lord Jesus. And you understand when I say personal faith, I'm not just talking about believing the things that Christians know are true about him.

I am talking about personal trust in him, trust which takes for granted what indeed he said before he left his disciples, I am with you always, I am there, which means here to be trusted.

If you will turn toward me, I will receive you, I will send the Spirit and your lives will be changed. So, yes, there is a clear path into the new life and that is the path of putting faith in the Christ who was Jesus said to Nicodemus, is lifted up like the serpent lifted up in the wilderness so that people may believe in him.

You know the serpent story, do you? It's an Old Testament story. This is something that happened in the course of the wilderness wanderings of the Israelites. There were snakes in the camp and people were dying of snake bite.

God said to Moses, make a brass serpent and put it up high up on a pole in the middle of the camp and tell the people who have been bitten to look to the snake, fix their eyes on it and they will immediately be healed.

[ 34 : 45 ] Sounds weird, doesn't it? But it actually happened and Jesus picks it up as a picture of what happens when people see him with their mind's eye, lifted up as he was on the cross as our substitute on whom the guilt of our sins was laid.

He died for us in that very fundamental sense. The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all.

It's put in Isaiah 53 and I'm sure we all know the words. And Jesus, by bearing our sin, bore it away.

We don't have to bear the penalty of it now and no longer does the reality of our sin act as a barrier cutting us off from God. No.

Because of the cross everything is different in terms of our relationship to the Father. And we get to the Father now through faith in the risen Son who did this for us and it's through the Holy Spirit now we come back to a further point about the Spirit it is through the Holy Spirit changing the heart that we come to that faith.

[ 36 : 10 ] Did you realize that? No one can say Jesus is Lord except through the Holy Spirit says Paul in one place. That's the very basic starting point for teaching about the Spirit as a matter of fact in his New Testament ministry.

That initial trust in Jesus which brings us out of darkness into light and brings us into fellowship with the Father with whom previously we were at odds.

That faith in Jesus that brings forth repentance and a total change of life. That is the work of the Holy Spirit and the very outgoing of our heart towards the Lord in trust and repentance.

That is the first fruits of what the Spirit is doing in our hearts. So Christians thank God for their conversion as much as they thank God for the gift of the Saviour in whom they trust.

That's the biblical way. all the good, all the godliness that is found in our lives from the word go is the work of the Holy Spirit.

[ 37 : 31 ] And on it goes from that point. Right. Now let me speak of five realities which are involved in Christian life in the Spirit.

what might be called the practice of the presence of the Holy Spirit in one's own personal being. Let's bring this right down to earth.

I believe as I speak to you that the Holy Spirit in my heart and in my head is helping me with such truth and wisdom as I'm able to present to you.

and I believe that as I speak to you the Holy Spirit is working in your heart and in your head so that there will be understanding and sharing in these precious things of which I'm going to speak now.

So Christ is Lord among us yes and the Holy Spirit also is Lord among us at this very moment teaching us all.

[ 38 : 47 ] Now the five realities. The first is realization. Realization that you yourself through Christ in and through the Spirit are a new creature.

You've been made new inside. people watching you should be able to see that something has happened to you because of what they see on the outside.

The way you behave. The attitudes of overflowing love that you maintain towards the people to whom you're related. The initiatives that you take in order to help others.

The witness that you bear to the new life that's come your way. All of that is external and something's wrong actually with our Christian profession if people don't see it.

But it's the expression of what God has done within and realization is the key to living this new life.

[ 40 : 03 ] Realizing that is that through faith in Jesus. Your heart has been changed. If anyone is in Christ he's a new creature or there is a new creation.

Paul says that in 2 Corinthians chapter 5. You realize that it's true of yourself. You realize that God has raised you from spiritual death to spiritual life.

You realize that God's purpose for you now is that having adopted you into his family as he's done he wants you to bear the family likeness.

So he's working in you through the spirit to transform you into the character image of Jesus the Lord. You realize that and you realize that that's the real point of the good works.

which you know the good works is a phrase which the New Testament tosses around. Not everybody appreciates the full weight of it when they meet it I find.

[ 41 : 12 ] The good works for which we are born again. The good works spoken of in the middle of Ephesians chapter 2 when Paul says do you know this text?

We are his workmanship his creation created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

The good works in question are works, acts, habits of Christ likeness. That's what makes them good actually that they are Christ like.

our Father as I said our Father in Heaven wants us to bear the family likeness and is working in us to transform us progressively into that likeness as we see it in the person of the Lord Jesus.

That incidentally let me just slip this in is the basic reason why I with others in the church insist that the four gospels are the most precious documents within the whole of the precious Bible.

[ 42 : 29 ] For there we see our Savior in action. He's the model. And there we see what Christ's likeness lived out is going to mean. Well, I mustn't pursue that.

Suffice it to say that the first work of the Holy Spirit or the first level of his work in our lives not once for Christians is to make us realize this and remember it.

Yes, remembering is important. We move out into the world where people don't share our faith, they don't live the way that we do, the temptation to go with the crowd and live a life which doesn't involve godliness, indeed is contrary to godliness, that temptation is very strong.

If we forget who we are as Christians, we may very well fall victim to the pressure and go along with the crowd. We must not do that.

We should be asking the Lord daily to keep us remembering who we are through the Holy Spirit, keeping these truths that I just mentioned alive in our hearts and our minds.

[ 43 : 49 ] Second reality, following on realization and remembrance in that sense, meditation. Realization, meditation.

Meditation. Scripture speaks particularly in the Psalms, and particularly may I say in Psalm 119, in which you've got 175 out of 176 verses telling you of the place that the Word of God should have in a believer's life.

It's all laid out in Old Testament terms, but it applies exactly to New Testament Christians. Also, in that great long psalm about the place of the Word of God in the Godly man's life, there are constant references to meditation as something that the psalmist does, and something that he wants to do more of.

Why? Well, because he wants the truth of God to be uppermost, in clarity, in its fullness, uppermost in his mind at all times.

meditation is a form of directed thinking, and friends, let us be honest with ourselves, it's something that it seems to me Christians don't know very much about these days, and I suspect that we all of us suffer spiritually from not knowing very much about it.

[ 45 : 32 ] So I'm simply going to say, without elaborate comment, there are at least three ways of meditating on scripture.

That is, thinking it through, verbalizing it in your own mind, thinking it through before the Lord to assure him, as well as assuring yourself, that yes, you understand this.



The three ways, I don't say there are more than three, but the three ways I'm going to put before you are, first of all, meditating on a passage. You take a chapter, a half chapter of something of scripture, you read it through, you read it through again, perhaps, and you ask three questions.

What does this passage tell me about God? what does this passage tell me about life, godly life in this world?

Or for that matter, what does it tell me about ungodly life in this world, or something I've got to avoid? What does it tell me then about God, about life?

[ 46 : 51 ] And in light of that, the third question, what does it tell me about the life that I'm living, and have to live, this very day? how does all this apply to me, where I am right now?

And I have found over the years that working with those three questions, passage after passage of scripture becomes wonderfully rich as instruction about God, revelation of the truth about life, and admonition meditation for my own discipleship, day by day.

I recommend to you then that way of meditation, which is, I think, the commonest one nowadays amongst those who do meditate.

Then there's a second way of meditating, which is hardly understood by anyone these days, and that is thinking through a theme, the theme of, shall I say, Christ on the cross, atoning for our sins, Christ in his glory, sending the Holy Spirit, reigning over the world, making himself present through the Holy Spirit to each single Christian, yes, you see, the Lord Jesus is divine, he can do that, and he does it, or maybe the theme is the Holy Spirit himself, ministering to the individual in all the different ways that I'm mentioning today and perhaps more, or the theme is, well, what could it be?

It could be the grace of God in the church. What does it mean for a church to be a godly church, a Christ-centered church, a spirit-filled church?

[ 48 : 51 ] But you take a theme and you think your way through it before the Lord in his presence and constantly allowing your thoughts to lead you into prayers, prayers of thanks or prayers of petition, that what you're thinking about may become more of a reality for you and your fellow Christians than it has been thus far.

It's a second way of meditating. There's a third way that is popular nowadays in certain circles. It has a Latin name. It's called *Lectio Divina*, which was a medieval phrase meaning divine reading.

That is intensive imaginative meditation on one or two verses which you repeat to yourself think your way through over and over again and you follow the imaginative pictures, analogies, thrust and parallels that these verses suggest to you.

It's rather like a borehole for oil. you may have to do quite a bit of boring before you strike oil but you are focusing on these one or two verses which you suspect are oil rich in spiritual terms and you work with them until they begin to open up with riches of all sorts which you then gladly take to yourself as wisdom and instruction from God at a deep level.

Well those are ways of meditating I leave the subject now with a single question. Friends, do you meditate? If you don't, will you start?

[ 50 : 57 ] You will find that it's an inestimable blessing from God once you get into the way of it. It's, well I use the image of an oil rich borehole this is like, this meditation operates like a steady flow of oil, a steady flow of water you might say, if it's water you're thinking of, a steady flow anyway of what it takes to keep you spiritually on the ball.

water you're doing. And with that I move on to the third reality which life in the spirit brings and that is adoration, praise, thanks, God centered adoration, exalting God, glorifying God in your own hearts.

The charismatic folk helped us a lot there by insisting that a big part of the life of prayer must be praise, praise and thanks.

And many of us have been very much enriched by taking that to heart. Time presses, so I'm not going to stop on it. I move straight on to the fourth reality to which the Holy Spirit leads us.

Realization, meditation, adoration and now imitation, imitation of Christ. You will remember perhaps that in Galatians, letter to the Galatians, chapter 5, Paul talks about the fruit of the Spirit.

[ 52 : 49 ] these are the words that he uses. The fruit of the Spirit, verse 22, is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Nine virtues. And you look at them as a group and you realize this is the character profile of the Lord Jesus, which is now to be reproduced in us, his disciples.

You look again and you realize the fruit of the Spirit is in fact habits. Nine habits which go together.

Nine habits that express themselves in action as is appropriate. love is the habit of good will and seeking the benefit of others even when they aren't showing good will to you or seeking your benefit.

Joy is the habit of rejoicing at the love of God and the gifts of God and the goodness of God towards you even when just at this moment it seems that the roof is falling in and it's trouble, trouble, trouble all around you.

[ 54 : 24 ] The Christian heart is capable of rejoicing even in times of trouble, even in times of sorrow. How do you rejoice? Because it is a verb, you know, it's something we're told to do.

Well, you don't wait for a mood of euphoria to come upon you. You start meditating on those realities that bring joy to the Christian heart.

You start reminding, you remind yourself of the love of God, the love of Christ. You remind yourself of the achievement of the cross. You remind yourself of the privilege of being forgiven your sin and adopted into God's family.

You remind yourself of how much God loves you and how steady his love is. And as you think of those things, it's as if the pump of your heart is being primed and spontaneously you find yourself rejoicing.

That's the habit of joy. And it's central to Christian character. You find it in Jesus. He spoke about his purpose, that my joy should remain with you.

[ 55 : 40 ] Well, this is the reality of it. Joy, peace. Again, when there's trouble and hostility, you think, remind yourself of the work that Christ has done to make peace with God, of the sovereign rule of Christ over the cosmos, which means that you can be at peace with circumstances.

His hand is on the trouble, the hostility, the pressure that you're being put under. He knows what he's doing. He is the Lord and he loves you.

And so you live at peace with your circumstances, just as you are able to live at peace with yourself. Some people find it very difficult to forgive themselves for messes that they've made in their life at an earlier stage when, if God forgives you, you've really got to forgive yourself.

You can't be less forgiving than God. So, the habit of peace is to be cultivated, and so we might go on.

Patience, that's endurance under pressure, Christ models that, and we are called to walk in his footsteps as we are in kindness and goodness and faithfulness and gentleness and self-control.

[ 57 : 13 ] I'll leave it to you to work out the details. I simply make once again the point that this is imitation of Christ in character terms that we're talking about.

And the service of others need, which is an expression of love, is of course an aspect of Christ-likeness and must be there in our lives all the time.

We shall be, it may have sounded actually from what I've said so far, as if we should be looking inward all the time, but no, not all the time. As a habit of mind we should be looking around us to see what is the best and the most that we can do for our Lord today and then tomorrow and then the day after that and what can I do most effectively to help the people in need that I am meeting up with, bumping into, finding myself confronted with.

What is the best and what is the most that I can do to help them, serve them, and to glorify the Lord. And remember, the service of need that I'm speaking about covers spiritual need as well as material need.

What my neighbor needs most is to know the Lord whom I know and I'm in a position to share within, if he'll let me.

[ 58 : 54 ] I must at least try to do it, as well as trying to do anything else that meets material needs that he has and that I find myself able to meet.

And finally, fifth reality into which the Holy Spirit within us leads us, anticipation. The New Testament makes a great song and dance about hope in Christ.

We have a hope of glory. We have a hope of being brought safely to glory by the Lord who sends the Spirit to watch over us and keep us in the faith as long as life lasts.

And, well, we can't say very much about the glory. We're given pictures of it in Scripture, but they are only pictures, and what they are pictures of is really beyond our imagining.

The most one can say is that they are wonderfully evocative pictures, pictures of a fellowship city where everything is light, everything is beauty, everything is joy, joy, and the light, and the beauty, and the joy never come to an end.

[ 60 : 22 ] And the Holy Spirit does move us to think of our hope often, and to anticipate it, look forward, and hope to the end, I'm quoting 1 Peter now, hope to the end for the grace that is to come to you when the Lord Jesus comes back to lead all his people into the fullness of this glory.

Well, that's life in the Spirit, viewed from the inside out. This is the inner reality of Christian fellowship in love, Christian prayer and praise, ministry and service, yes, it's to come out of a Christ-like change of character, and hope and holiness also, there's a real sense in which the Christian life is heaven's life begun, you know, in this world.

We are foretasting through the Spirit now something of the joy that we're going to inherit then. Hope, the hope of glory.

And on this note, I close, I've had my hour, you have listened very patiently. I hope that something of the glory of this ministry of the Spirit to Christians has come across to you.

I'll tell you, it thrills me, and I would like to think that the thrill is shared. joy, this is delight, this is privilege, this is triumph.

[ 62 : 14 ] And so I leave it with you, friends. Let's move from monologue into dialogue. I would like to know what you think about some of these questions, comments, anything that you'd like to say.

So, please. Dr. Pucker, we discovered recently that on the subject of meditation that memorization of Scripture produces an automatic response of the Spirit of God within any one person to not only understand the depth and the wealth and the meaning of the words, but also to be able to write them and to preserve them often for reflection later on.

And this is something that as a child in sun school we memorized Scripture, but to rediscover that in our later years is a means of meditation which has been very, very good.

Thank you so much for that. You're so right. And the good old habit of memorizing Scripture has pretty much perished among us and we need to recover it.

No two ways about that. You know probably that I had something to do with the production of the English Standard Version of the Bible.

[ 63 : 45 ] Well, one of the things that concerned us right the way through was to achieve a crisp rendering of everything that would make it easy, or at least as easy as it can be, straightforward anyway, for memorizing.

We looked at other modern translations and realized that they hadn't done this in any disciplined way. We tried to do it, but the result is before the public.

We venture to say, whenever we're asked, this is a version for memorizing, as well as for expanding, as well as for study at every level, whether academic or catechism level, we have tried to make it suitable for all those uses.

And this one, memorization, was certainly big in our thinking, as I said, all the way through. Well, I say that not as a commercial for the ESV, so much as a way of affirming, sir, what you just said.

It's pure wisdom, and I hope we're all of us hearing it as pure wisdom. And be it said too, that memorizing is easiest when you're a child.

[ 65 : 07 ] You have to work harder with your memory when you're an adult. So, if we have any opportunity of ministry to children, let's get them into the way of memorizing key passages of scripture just as soon in their young lives as we can.

Do you have any thoughts on why it is that the Holy Spirit isn't revealed as a person until the New Testament? Well, it isn't only the Holy Spirit who is saved, as it were, until the New Testament time.

It's equally true that the divinity of the Lord Jesus, the second person of the Godhead, the word of God, isn't revealed in the Old Testament.

I think one has to say God has his own order for teaching truth, as any wise teacher has, and all through the Old Testament period, he was hammering away with Israel on the very fundamental fact that there is only one God.

You know, they were being betrayed into cultic idolatry, right, left, and center, and God had to keep hammering away through the prophets, through Moses, and prophets, of course, centuries after Moses, but the issue was still there.

[ 66 : 43 ] They were lapsing into idolatry, and God had to insist, there is only one God, and I am it. See? So, you're to have no other gods but me, and I am to have the whole of your allegiance, you're to love me with all your heart and mind and soul and strength.

That's Moses in Deuteronomy. And until that lesson had been learned, I suppose, it would have been premature to reveal the distinct personhood of the Son, and the distinct personhood of the Spirit could only really be revealed after the distinct personhood of the Son, because, I didn't labor this point, but I'll say it, state it now, the Spirit's ministry in the New Testament is subordinate all the time to the ministry of the Lord Jesus.

As he says, as Jesus says, he, that's the Holy Spirit, when he comes, will glorify me, for he will take of what's mine and show it to you.

Well, you can picture it this way, the Holy Spirit is shy. He doesn't call attention to himself, he directs all attention to the Lord Jesus.

And he does, I mean, that's what's going on all through the New Testament. So, really, it would have been out of order for God to reveal this distinct personhood of the Spirit before the distinct personhood of the Son, the Word, who atones for sin, and whom the Father wants to be honored as the Lord, before all of that has been revealed.

[ 68 : 37 ] And then the Spirit is brought in as the one whose mission and purpose is to glorify the Son in the hearts of people like you and me.

I think that's the way to look at it. Could you describe having an epiphany people often talk about when you read about when you feel it yourself?

Do you have an epiphany about the closeness of the Holy Spirit? I'm asked about particular you use the word epiphany you mean an inner revelation of the closeness of the Lord and I don't want to separate the Spirit from the Father and the Son so I'll put it in terms of the closeness of the Father and the Son through the Spirit or the Father and the Son and the Spirit well all I can say about it is that there is a doctrine taught by the Lord Jesus to the effect that those he's thinking of his disciples now those who keep his commandments so the people who love him see love appears by what you do don't say that you love the Lord if you don't obey his word those who keep his commandments are the ones who love him and says the Lord

Jesus I will my father we will love that person and make ourselves known to that person and even come to dwell with that person make our abode with that person it's a Greek word that means take up residence in and with that person and it's through the Holy Spirit that that will happen Jesus promises that in the context of declaring what the Holy Spirit will do when he's sent well you can't make a doctrine out of that beyond saying this is what God has promised to do that when and how for each individual believer is something which which is distinct in the experience of that believer and we don't all have our spiritual experiences of the closeness of the Lord the epiphanies in the same way or at the same time

I can only say that when it does happen you will know it you will realize that God in his mercy has drawn very close to you and he's impressing his reality and perhaps some particular truth very hard if that's the word to use very deeply perhaps I should say on your heart and the thing that we should do in our own prayers is to make sure we are always hoping tell the Lord that we are hoping for an experience of his closeness because it will give us strength for his service give us joy in our hearts and make us stronger than we were before to glorify his name then day by day we live trusting in his upholding and we wait to see what more he will do in our own inner experience that's the way

[ 72 : 36 ] I think we must come at it and if your heart says at this very moment well I've never experienced anything that I could describe like that I would say to you ask the Lord that if indeed it will bless and strengthen you that he and the Lord Jesus through the spirit will draw near to you and bring you senses of his very close a sense of his very close presence at the appropriate moment or moments I'm being rather careful in the way I phrase this I don't want to discourage anyone I want to encourage everyone actually Janet has raised something that's very important and very enriching but I you can't tie God down we don't manage him he runs us it's that way around

Bill in the book of Acts you get the impression that that demons and the devil are counterfeiting what the Holy Spirit does and so there's a bit of a battlefield out there and I wonder sometimes what do you think of the how easy it is to mistake one for the other the ministry or the gift of spiritual discernment seems to be very important but how easily masses of people can be confused with really what's going on sometimes thank you Bill very much for saying that because it's true it's wise and it's important yes we are living in a world where

Satan and his minions though they keep out of sight in a way that they didn't do in the days of the Acts they are constantly busy trying to confuse and mislead the Lord's people and if we allow ourselves to think that anything out of the ordinary that we might describe as supernatural is from God we shall be in trouble as Bill says there has to be discernment Satan and his hosts within limits could produce effects in human life which seem to be supernatural but the true test the acid test the conclusive test is always to us no wait a minute in these supernatural experiences is the glory of the

Lord Jesus at the center of things and is his ministry what is centrally being displayed and confirmed or not if the experience leads away from Jesus Christ then it comes from the pit if the experience brings a focus on Jesus Christ it was the Lord it was the spirit so that's the criteria very simply stated not always so easy to apply but still that's the principle thank you Bill yeah right thank you Dr.

Dr. you've spoken about the Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts and our minds particularly in relationship to salvation do you think there's a place for speaking of the Holy Spirit dwelling in our bodies being the breath of life in us and perhaps even in all living things at the level of creation and providence the sustaining of the world that God has made yes I think we should say that it's God through his spirit who sustains the order of creation it would be theologically right to say that spring is the gift of God the Holy Spirit the Spirit acting on the Father's behalf but this is not anything to do with the Spirit's ministry and salvation just as creation is not the same thing as redemption and what I've been talking about this morning is entirely the what shall I call it the repair job which

[ 77 : 40 ] Father Son and Spirit together have undertaken in this world it's a wonderful world and the order that God has made point after point can still be seen and wondered at and it's fantastic but morally it's disordered through sin and so a repair job in human beings is called for and as I said that's what I've been talking about all the time but you're right yes I think you are implying what I just said that the Holy Spirit sustains and shows his power in such realities as the round of the year that lovely sunshine outside the green leaves and so on and so forth yes praise God for that too Bill you rise to your feet and you know what that means putting it brutally you want me to shut up okay thank you sir

Thank you.