

The Holy Spirit

For some years now there has been a great deal of interest in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, not all of it has been Biblical or healthy.

THE DEITY OF THE SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is more than a divine influence or attribute. He is a divine Person. He is truly God, the same in substance and equal in power and glory with the Father and the Son. "The Lord is that Spirit" (II Cor. 3:17). So the title of deity is clearly given to Him. This is seen also in Acts 5:3, 4, where lying to the Holy Ghost is termed lying to God. The attributes of deity are ascribed to Him in Scripture, as are the acts of God, such as creation (Gen.1:2), resurrection (Rom. 8:11; I Pet. 3:18), regeneration (John 6:63), and the inspiration of the Scriptures (II Pet. 1:21; II Tim. 3:16).

THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT

It is the Holy Spirit who convinces men of sin (John 16:8). He it is who quickens, or regenerates, souls dead in sins (John 3:3-8; Eph. 2:1). He baptizes every regenerated soul into the body of Christ (I Cor.12:13). He indwells every believer and makes him His temple (I Cor. 6:19). The Holy Spirit sanctifies those whom He indwells (I Pet. 1:2; II Thess. 2:13). He begets an attitude of prayerfulness in believers (Rom. 8:26). He is the promised "Comforter," the Paraclete, the One called alongside God's people to help them. He is Christ's Vicar, supplying to Christians today what the physical presence of Christ meant to His disciples when He was with them on earth (John 16:7, 13-15).

THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT

Christ promised His disciples the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4). In this way they were to "receive power" (Acts 1:8), or "be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). He fulfilled His promise to them on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4). At various later times we read of those same disciples being "filled with the Holy Ghost" (e.g., Acts 4:8, 31).

This fullness of power was to equip them for service. Every Christian is to live his life constantly full of the Holy Ghost (Eph. 5:18)--constantly under the control of the Spirit. Scripture also speaks of special demonstrations of the Spirit's power in and through the witness of His people. The exhibition of that power is what constitutes true revival, and the more widespread the demonstration of power, the greater the revival. In the Free Presbyterian Church we lay great emphasis upon the reality of being filled with the Holy Spirit. We pray constantly for His fullness of power. We long for true revival. We do not despise the ordinary means by which the Lord carries on the work of His church, but we pray earnestly and continually that in His sovereign grace He will visit us in revival fullness.

THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT

We view true revival as being far different from the phenomena associated with the modern Charismatic movement. That movement has become more and more an ecumenical tool to produce a one-world church. It is light on the essential doctrines of the gospel. It exudes the atmosphere and techniques of the world of show business. Its claimed "gifts" have little or nothing in common with the gifts of the Spirit set forth in Scripture. For example, the gift of tongues in Acts 2 was a gift that enabled God's servants to preach in languages they had never learned. That is the essence of the Biblical gift of tongues. In contrast, the modern Charismatic use of tongues is a jumble of meaningless sounds.

We reject what we believe to be counterfeits of the gifts that the Spirit gave to the early church. We also reject the claimed extra-Scriptural revelations of modern Charismatics. One of the leading theologians of the movement has taught openly that not all God's truth for us is in the Bible and claims authority for the visions and voices of prophets like himself. We reject all extra-Scriptural revelation as a dangerous delusion.

However, the Charismatic misuse of such Biblical terms as "being filled with the Spirit" must not prejudice us against a Scriptural pursuit of the Spirit's power in our ministry. Throughout church history God has imparted to His servants special endowments of power to preach the gospel. Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, John Wesley, C. H. Spurgeon, D. L. Moody, and a host of other great preachers knew the anointing of God's Spirit for service. They were not dabblers in tongues and extra-Scriptural revelations. They were not interested in high-powered human promotions. They cried to God for the power of His Spirit in revival fullness, and He answered their cry. We look to Him to answer us in the same way.