

What is the Work of the Holy Spirit?

By Fr. Archer Torrey

Korean version published in the series, "Letters from a Mountain Valley" *Shinangye* magazine, March 1991.

English version © 1991 Archer Torrey, © 2004 Estate of Archer Torrey. All rights reserved.

Dear Father Torrey,

How are things going at Jesus Abbey? Who is in charge while you are away? I hope that all the news is good news!

As a Presbyterian pastor in the United States, Father Torrey, I am concerned about understanding the work of the Holy Spirit. I wondered about this long before I went to seminary, but have discovered that what I was taught in seminary, and what I have seen in real life just don't fit together. The older I grow, the more confused I become.

In seminary, I was told that miracles ended with the apostles in the first century. What I see happening today convinces me this is not so. On the other hand, I see some who emphasize the power of the Holy Spirit, while living lives that do not match up with what Scripture defines. These people show no sign of the fruit of the Spirit. Though there are many different teachings circulating, they don't seem to fit together. So how do we relate the different works of the Holy Spirit?

Your servant in Christ,
(Pastor) John Jones

Dear Pastor Jones,

Thank you for your letter. Father Jeremiah Chu is now Director of Jesus Abbey, and my title is now "Founder." While I am overseas, everything at the Abbey flows right along, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, through the Members' Meeting and the Director and Coordinators. After all, it is Jesus Abbey, not my Abbey, or anybody else's Abbey! For twenty-five years we have depended on the promise of Jesus: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

He has honored that promise, and we have had the joy, day in and day out, of seeing him at work. Often we discover, long afterwards, what he was doing. During these few months overseas, I have run into a number of people who tell me how Jesus met them, many years ago, at Jesus Abbey and how he changed their lives.

One of these is now a Presbyterian pastor and is in a ministry called "Presbyterian and Reformed Renewal Ministries," which just completed an exciting conference for leaders of the various Presbyterian and Reformed churches in the U.S.A. It was my privilege to be there, too, (even though I am not a Presbyterian any longer I still love the Presbyterian Church), and I saw the Holy Spirit at work in real power. I also found many pastors who had the same questions you have raised. As we searched the scriptures together and compared our experiences, we

discovered that the Bible teaching is clear and consistent, and that God wants all his people to have the Holy Spirit in all his roles.

The Holy Spirit has four main roles that he plays: He gives power, he gives fruit, he gives wisdom, and he gives koinonia. Let me tell you about some help I received from Oriental philosophy. I'm sure you have seen the Korean flag, with its blue and red "Yin-Yang" symbol. Many Korean Christians think this is a pagan symbol, but it actually comes from Genesis 1:27: "God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them."

Yin and Yang stand for male and female, but Genesis tells us that this is the image of God. That means that, somehow, all reality is reflected in that symbol. Now, as we look at the world, we can see a tremendous number of ways in which this principle applies. One of the most universal is inner and outer, neither of which can exist without the other. In Korea, the man is known as the "Outer Person," and the woman as the "Inner Person." The common expression for husband and wife is, "Inner and Outer Person."

As we look at the work of the Holy Spirit, we can see how the Bible clearly distinguishes his inner work and his outer work. The two are never confused. The outer work is referred to by such words as "anointed," "come upon", and "baptized." All these have to do with receiving the power of the Holy Spirit to prophesy or to heal and to do other "mighty works." Paul lists these in I Corinthians 12. We see them in action all around the world.

But the inner work is equally important, as Paul emphasized in I Corinthians 13, and again in Galatians 5:22-23. This is the fruit. It is love. There is a problem, however, with the word "filled," which we usually associate with the fruit of the Spirit. It seems to be used both ways, but our Bible students at the conference shared with us that there are two different Greek words. One is *plethes*, and one is *pleres*. As we compare the way these two words are used, we find that *plethes* means "charged," as you charge a battery with power, and recharge it each time it runs down. The other word, *pleres*, means "saturated," as a tree is filled with sap continuously, in order to produce fruit.

Thus we saw that the two works of the Holy Spirit – outer for power, and inner for fruit – and the two ways of being filled with the Spirit are both important. Many people, tragically, have one without the other. Think of a Christmas tree and a fruit tree. The fruit tree is alive, and has roots. The Christmas tree may or may not be rooted and alive, but it is spectacularly loaded with gifts! This is why some famous people are loaded with power, but lack true holiness.

The third work of the Holy Spirit is wisdom. The symbol that was used for the Korean Olympics in 1988 were triple swirling red, blue and yellow rings. This is a good illustration of how wisdom is related to the other two gifts, power and fruit. It also expresses the excitement that comes when all the works of the Holy Spirit are in operation. If Yin and Yang symbolize mother and father, the third ring stands for child. Wisdom, we realize, is the child of the other two works of the Spirit. A person who has only power will not have wisdom. A person who has the fruit of the Spirit but has been taught that gifts are not for our day will not claim the gift of wisdom. He will think that wisdom can only come through much study.

Many of us have confused wisdom and knowledge, forgetting that knowledge comes from study, while wisdom applies that knowledge in a practical way. James 1:5-8 teaches that wisdom is a free gift, not earned, as are all the other “charismatic” gifts. The one condition is that the person who asks must be a fruit-bearing Christian, one who loves God and is single-minded in his devotion. How tragic it is that so many Christians have failed to ask for wisdom!

The fourth work of the Holy Spirit is *koinonia*, a manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit, of love. Have you noticed how two Spirit-filled Christians become friends instantly when they meet, because the Spirit in one witnesses to the Spirit in the other? When all Christians love each other, they share what they have with each other as Acts 2 tells. They have fellowship with each other and confess to each other, forgiving one another, as I John 1 declares. The words for “share,” “fellowship,” “communion,” “partaking,” “distribution,” “communication,” “contribution,” “companion,” “partner,” and “common” are all related to *koinonia* in the Greek.

This is the word that describes the church, the Spirit-filled relationship of Christians to each other. The most powerful symbol of *koinonia* is the word “body” which the apostle Paul uses often to describe the church. Just as the different limbs and organs of a human body are totally dependent upon each other, they must work together in perfect harmony for the body to be healthy. In the same way, in order for the church to do its work, each person in the Christian body has a role to play. Only if he or she is fulfilling that role can the church fulfill its role in the world, with wisdom and with power. This *koinonia* is the word used in II Corinthians 13:13, which seems to indicate that it is the most important of all the Spirit’s works!

We found that all of these things go together in a proper and orderly relationship. I do hope that you and the members of your congregation will claim all that God has in store for you. There is nothing more beautiful than a church where all four works of the Holy Spirit are freely in operation. People are drawn to it. Because Christ is there, people meet him. Because the Holy Spirit is there, people receive the power to be born again, to grow in the Spirit, to produce fruit and to work in the Spirit with power.

They receive the gift of wisdom and many of them find that God is sending them out in the power of the Spirit to the ends of the world. Incidentally, one of the ends of the world is right at our feet and we often do not see it—as if it were on the other side of the globe—and that is people of a different class from ourselves.

Most of the Presbyterian churches in America, as well as my own denomination, the Episcopal or Anglican, are middle-class. Jesus said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.” But most of our churches have no good news for the poor. If we do anything at all for the poor, we do it in such a way as to embarrass them. We rarely find basic solutions to their problems. We are rarely interested in social justice.

Those who are concerned for the poor tend to ignore the Holy Spirit and to follow humanistic “solutions,” which are neither wise nor effective. The Holy Spirit not only pours his anointing on us to preach good news to the poor, he gives us the wisdom to know what that good news is, and the power to put it into effect. At our meeting we heard some exciting reports of Spirit-filled pastors and churches finding and effectuating imaginative and far-reaching programs of

social action. For them it is not either social action or evangelism, it is both social action and evangelism.

Brother, as I write this to you, something comes to mind. What do we mean by “good news for the poor”? (Luke 4:18, 7:22, Isaiah 61:1) Did Jesus just come to tell people to give the poor a handout? Did he tell people to have relief programs? Our governments try to do this sort of thing because the radicals have so often stirred up the poor to revolt. Do they have good news for the poor? Look at Russia. The poor revolted against the rich and tried to establish a solution to the problem of poverty without the wisdom or power of the Holy Spirit and now the whole nation is poor.

What is true good news for the poor? Is it that by believing in Jesus they can be saved from their sins and go to heaven when they die? You remember the old American folk song,

Long-haired preachers come out every night,
Try to tell us what's wrong and what's right.
If you ask about something to eat,
They will murmur in voices so sweet:

You will eat by and by
In that beautiful land beyond the sky.
Work and pray, live on hay.
You'll get pie in the sky when you die.

It is obvious that those poor people didn't consider going to heaven after they died to be the good news they were looking for.

So what is the Holy Spirit's good news to the poor? We find it in Acts, chapters 2 to 4, but the key verse is 4:34, *There was not a needy person among them.* They abolished poverty in their society! We could say the same thing of a lot of our congregations, because we have various ways to discourage the poor people from coming in!

But that is a far cry from that Holy Spirit-saturated and Holy Spirit-anointed church of Bible times. Yes, the koinonia of the Holy Spirit not only means that we all belong to each other, just as the arms and legs and hands and eyes and heart and lungs of a body belong to each other.

It also means that, by practical programs (including even, if necessary, selling houses and land) the poor are brought into this fellowship, this koinonia, and are no longer poor! The good news to the poor is that they don't have to be poor any longer.

There is another side to this, of course, as you and I well know. When all the Christians are poor, as in some countries, there is such a beautiful relationship among them that they can say with Paul, “Jesus, though he was rich for our sakes, became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich” (II Corinthians 8:9) Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! Yes, I say it with Paul as I begin to realize that we have only just begun to discover that it is not just the healing of bodies that comes by the power of the Holy Spirit, but also the healing of our society!

Why have we been so slow to see all this? Why have some of our churches emphasized the gifts of the Spirit, and others have emphasized the fruit of the Spirit, and others have emphasized being born again by the Spirit, and a few have talked a lot about wisdom without connecting it to the Holy Spirit? Others have talked a lot about social problems without connecting it with the Holy Spirit. Each has pointed the finger at the other and said, "They are on the wrong track!"

That is the work of Satan. Satan comes only to destroy and to divide. "Divide and conquer" is his motto, and he has been very busy all these years trying to conquer the church, dividing it over all kinds of issues by making sure that we did not understand the principle of Yin and Yang—that we belong together. Yes, not just Presbyterians and Anglicans, but Pentecostals and Evangelicals, Catholics and Protestants, Liberals and Conservatives. In the koinonia of the Holy Spirit we can tie together all the loose ends of both doctrine and practice, life and prayer, words and deeds! What a wonderful God we have!

Thank you for writing me, Brother Jones. As you pray for Jesus Abbey, I hope you will pray that our folks there may demonstrate the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God, the koinonia of the Holy Spirit. And may your church know in a new way the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the koinonia of the Holy Spirit!

Your brother in Christ,
Archer Torrey